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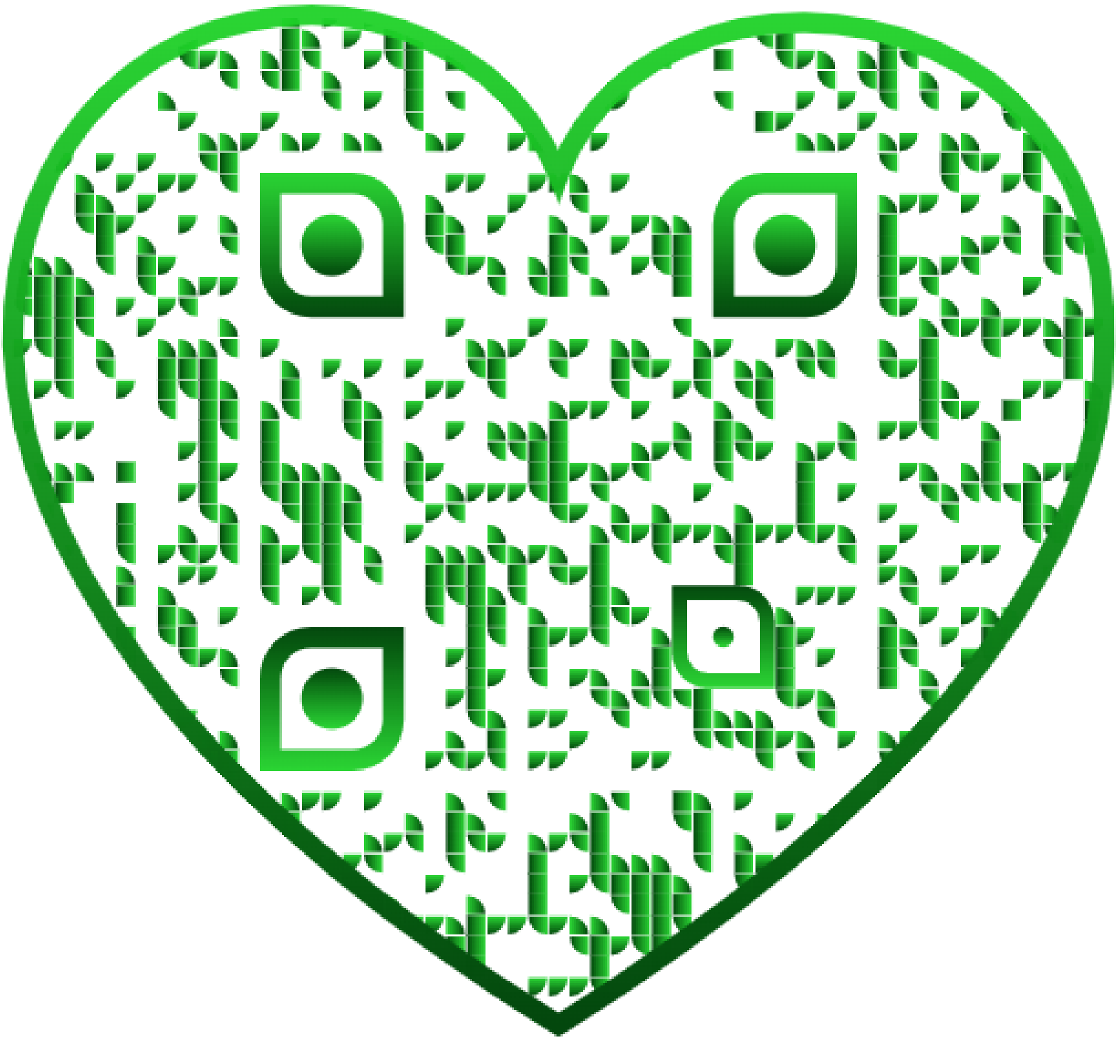

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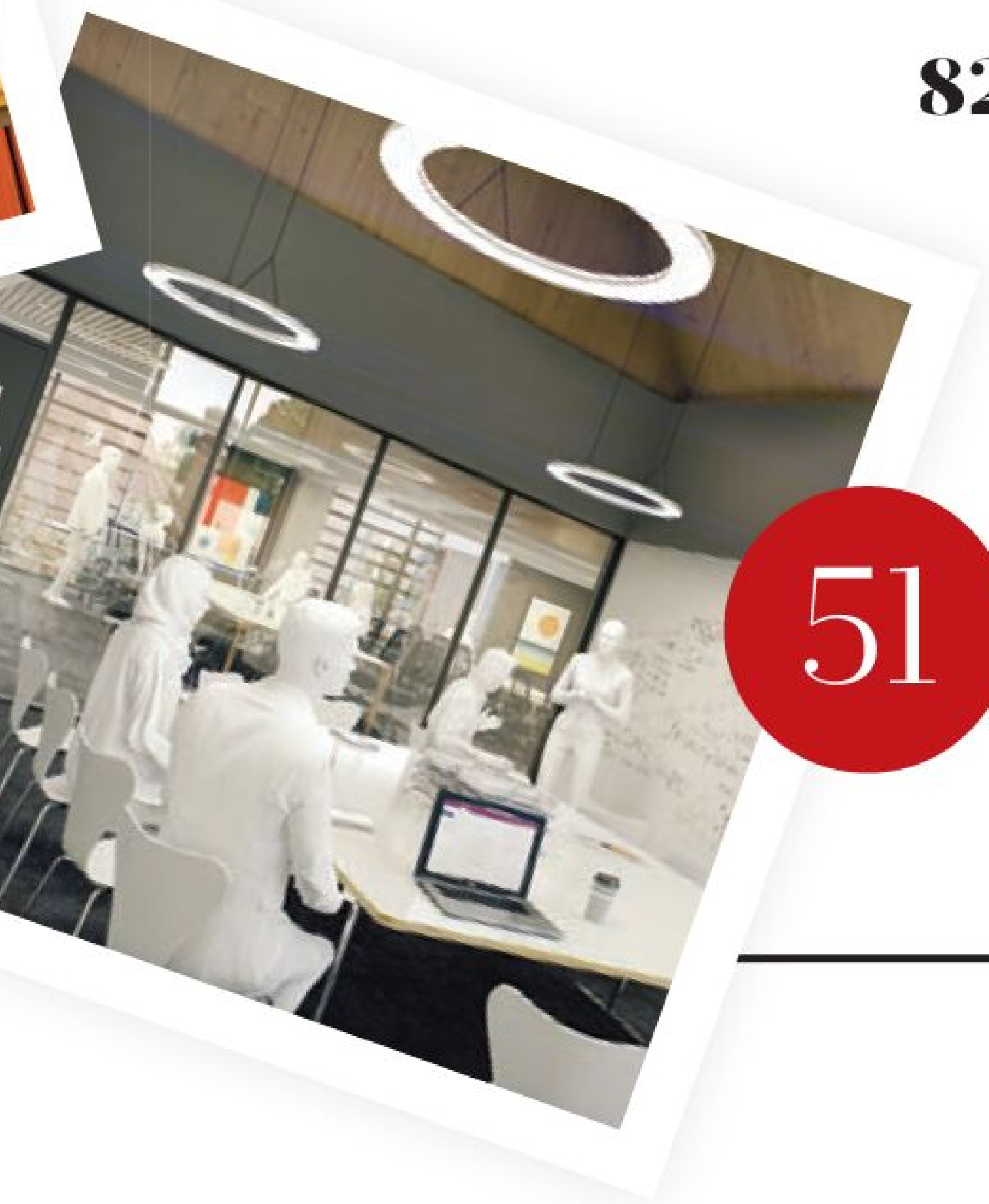

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FRONT COVER

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From the EDITOR

Education is so much more than academics, as we all know, and learning for life beyond school has become a strong theme of this issue.

We talk to five schools about how they build a spirit of resilience from earliest years (page 30) and find that all of them focus on showing children how to recover from failure. Learning how to pick ourselves up and have another go is a life lesson best taught early.

Smartphone use by children has risen up the educational agenda dramatically in recent times, but some schools have been way ahead on this. The Head Master of Rugby explores the twin issues of smartphones and 'safetyism', which schools such as his work to overcome (page 25).

Indeed, when it comes to smartphones, I can't help but think that we adults are the ones who have to wise up and undo some of the damage. We could start by restricting our smartphone use in front of our own and others' children. Going smartphone free for a while might be as liberating for us as it is for them.

Anderson Education are hosting their regular UK Boarding Schools exhibitions in Dubai and Saudi Arabia this spring, and the shows are a wonderful opportunity for parents to discover more about British education. Deciding whether moving abroad to go to school is right for your child can be a fraught process, and access to sound advice is key. Anyone considering this journey for their child will be in safe hands with the team of experts at Anderson.

> **"LEARNING HOW TO PICK OURSELVES UP** AND HAVE ANOTHER GO IS A LIFE LESSON BEST TAUGHT EARLY"

Libby Norman
EDITOR

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Deputy Head, Millfield

James has a BA in History and a PGCE from the University of Reading. He began his career in 1995 teaching History and Politics at Epsom College, later expanding his role to include the Marketing Department and establishing of Epsom Malaysia. James oversees student enrolment at Millfield Schools, public benefit, and international campus development.

Helen Simpson

Deputy Head, Pastoral, St George's Ascot

Helen Simpson graduated from Exeter University with a PE and Geography teaching degree. Before undertaking her role as Deputy Head Pastoral at St George's she worked and lived at LVS Ascot, a co-educational day and boarding school. In this issue, he highlights the ways that schools can embrace the digital age.

James Barton

Global Director, MPW Group

James Barton studied Archaeology and Ancient History at Warwick, followed by an MA in Performance Philosophy. Working in education for over 15 years, he has authored Trotman *Getting Into...* guides, as well as giving talks to, among others, TEDx and How To Academy. In this issue, he talks about the current challenges facing independent schools.

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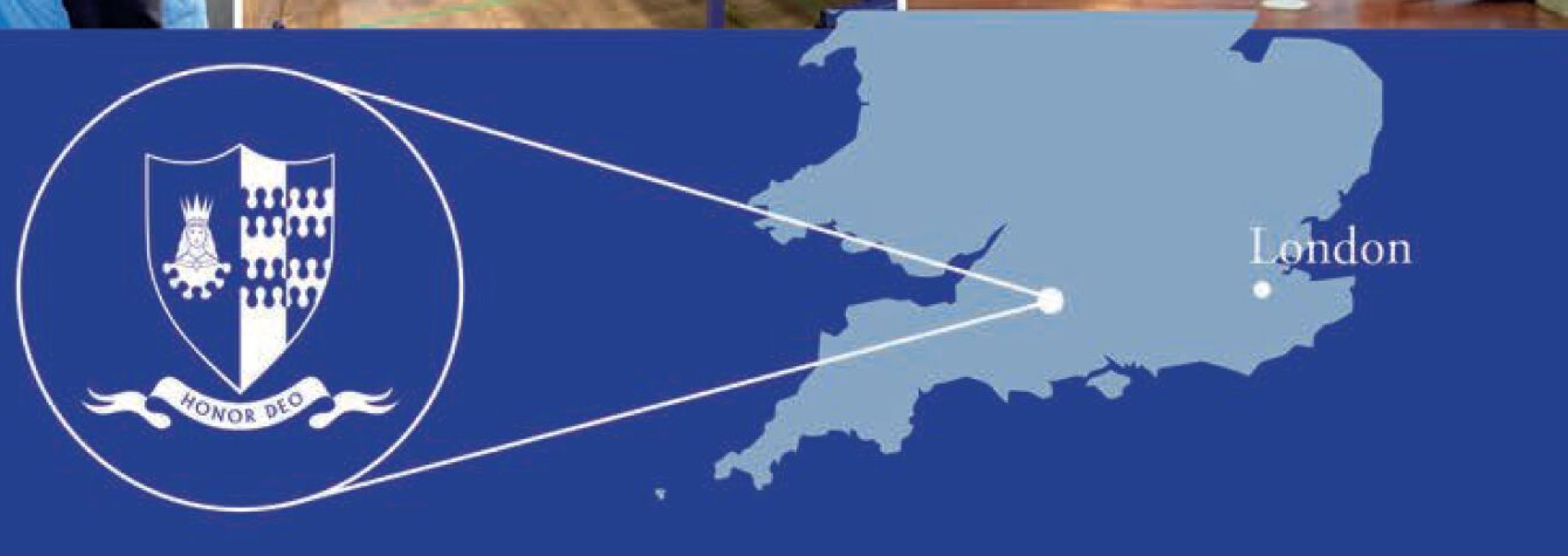
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QUEEN
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From ANDERSON EDUCATION

WHAT ASPIRATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR CHILDREN?

As parents we want our children to grow up as happy, healthy and successful young men and women; we strive to provide the best education possible and support them every step of the way, so that they can be the best version of themselves. There are many options for Expat families living in the Middle East and many consider boarding school in the UK. Joining a boarding school is more than just an education, it is a way of life and offers so many opportunities:

Excellent teaching – Experienced teachers who are passionate about their subject instil a love of learning, an ability to think creatively and to problem solve. Academic and learning support staff are on site and available throughout the week offering revision clinics, catch-up sessions or just the opportunity to ask a question.

Extracurricular activities – Schools offer a wide variety of clubs and activities for boarders to take part in during evenings and weekends. Students are encouraged to try something new, make the most of the facilities and find something that they really enjoy.

Small class sizes – With a pupil-teacher ratio of just 12 to 18 students in a class, teachers have the opportunity to get to know individual students and to tailor the learning environment to meet their needs.

Campus and facilities – Research has shown that the environment children learn in has a profound impact on their engagement. The seamless blend of historic and modern buildings, extensive grounds and world-class facilities for sport, music and the Arts, provides a dynamic environment that stays with the students long after they have left school.

A bespoke curriculum – Independent schools are able to teach beyond the national curriculum and the exam syllabus, providing students with a broad balanced curriculum and the opportunity to develop a true passion for a subject. This in turn prepares students for further study and future employment.

The academics – Independent schools achieve excellent results. All schools produce a Destination of Leavers List, outlining which universities and courses their students progressed to; this is a good indication of the strength of teaching. Sixth Form Options are offered to suit the learning style of each individual student, with a choice of A Levels, IB Diploma or BTEC vocational qualifications.

Outstanding pastoral care – Supporting a student's wellbeing, mental, social, physical and intellectual development is an integral part of a school's pastoral care. Boarding life is very structured with the day filled from the moment they jump out of bed to the time they get back in at night. A focus on the whole child provides the foundations they need to develop into well-rounded individuals, encourages confidence and independence and provides the life skills needed to prepare for life beyond school. Ⓔ

> JOINING A BOARDING SCHOOL IS MORE THAN JUST AN EDUCATION: IT IS A WAY OF LIFE, AND OFFERS SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES

Sara Sparling
DIRECTOR AND EDUCATION CONSULTANT,
ANDERSON EDUCATION
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TEDX TALKS

Three IB Diploma students at St Clare's, Oxford hosted a world-renowned TEDx event, presenting an evening of talks relating to the theme of 'Questioning the Norm' to spark deep discussions in their college community. Tina Tafur, Amelia Griffith and Ava May Simon put the spotlight on eight selected student speakers, with topics ranging from the importance of saying 'no' to how maths could solve global challenges. The videos are published on the 'TEDx Talks' YouTube channel.

School partnership

St Dunstan's Education Group and The Villa School & Nursery have a new partnership, giving children at The Villa the opportunity to transition to St Dunstan's schools at 7+. St Dunstan's Head Nick Hewlett says: "Parents will now be able to benefit from the new partnership without the worry of a stressful 7+ experience".

ON STAGE

Headington Rye Oxford brought F Scott Fitzgerald's iconic 'The Great Gatsby' to life with a dazzling mix of drama, romance and tragedy through four sold out performances. There were over 70 pupils involved in cast and crew, with over 50 of those being in the cast. Choreography, live music and direction were all provided by pupils.

CHOOSE GEOGRAPHY

Bella, age 10, from Walhampton Prep School, won the Young Geographer of the Year. An international award, from The Royal Geographical Society, where children are encouraged to think creatively and analytically about geographical themes. Bella's beautifully illustrated poster highlighted the range of issues that studying geography encompasses.

Rugby win

Wymondham College U14 touch rugby team were delighted to visit Twickenham, after winning the England Touch 2 Twickenham competition. The prize was to play rugby in front of the 80,000 crowd before the England vs South Africa game. The students also carried the England banner onto the pitch before the match.

> *"Mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves"*
>
> **STEVEN SPIELBERG**

Winner
Walhampton School

New Leader

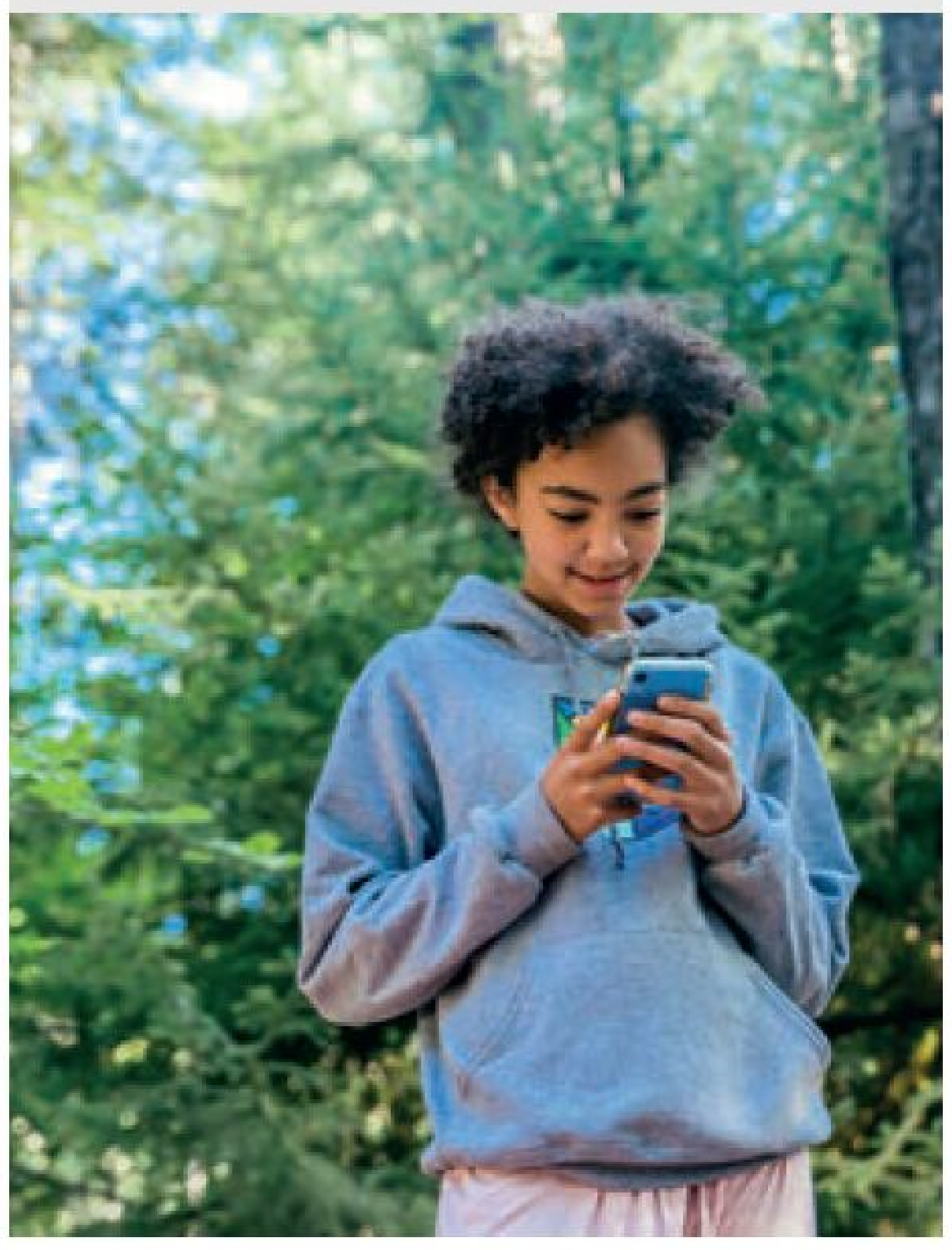
Emanuel School has appointed Ravi Kothakota as Head from September 2025. Currently Deputy Head: Pupils, he says: "I am delighted to be given the opportunity by the Governing Body to build on the exceptional work of Rob Milne, leading Emanuel towards an exciting future".

SPACE TIME

Science was out of this world for boys at Shrewsbury House School when they celebrated World Space Week in October. They were able to step inside a mobile planetarium and journey through the cosmos. The Surbiton prep is also celebrating as its Executive Head Joanna Hubbard (pictured) recently picked up a 'Best Head of a Prep School' award.

Phone campaign

First News relaunched its Look Up! campaign in September, to remind young people of the dangers of phone use around roads. Last year, over 4,500 pedestrians aged 15 and under were injured – that's a classroom each week. The assembly pack reminded children to put phones away and avoid being a SMOMBIE (smartphones + zombies).

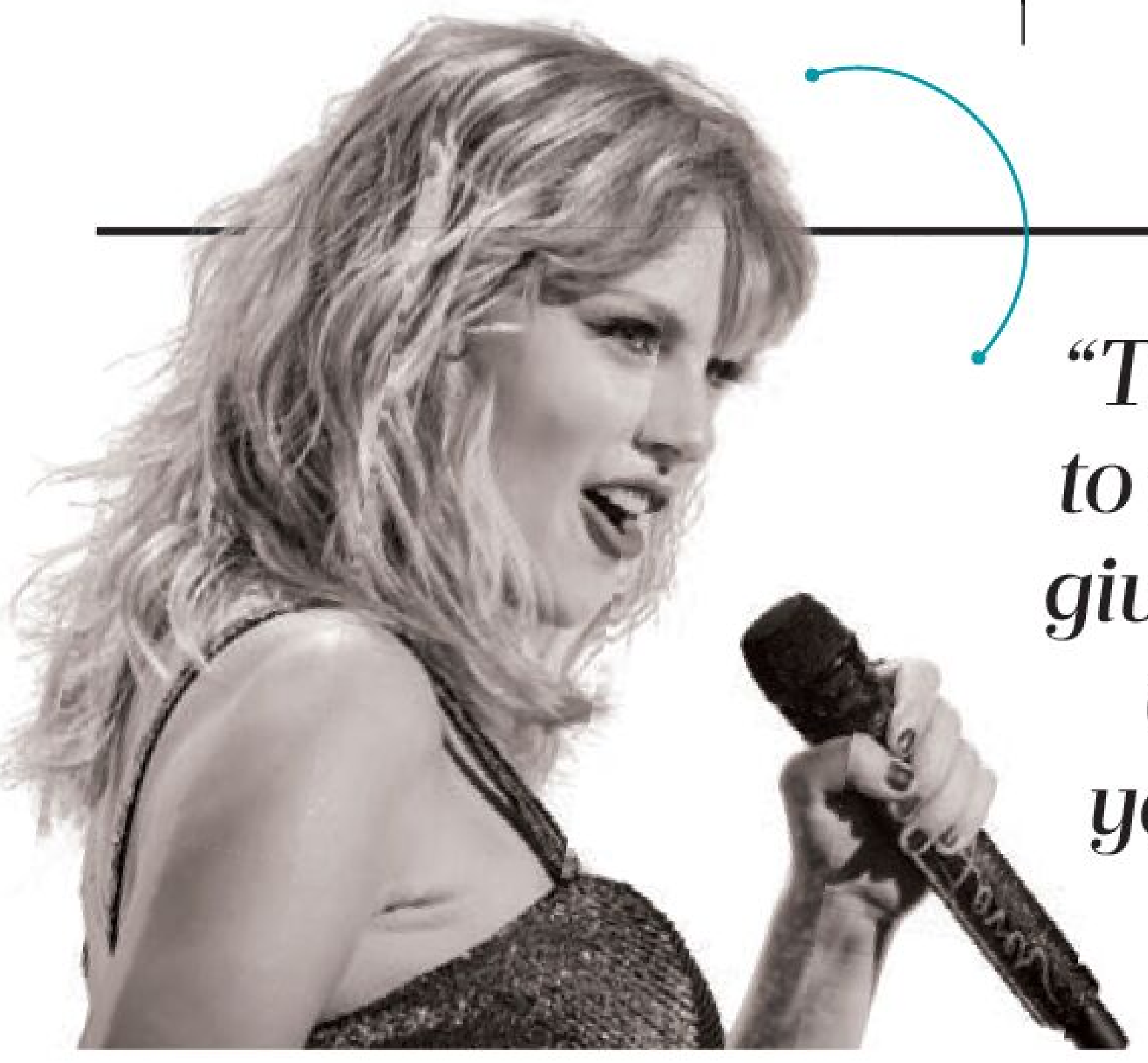


SCIENCE WINNERS

Students at Concord College have been celebrating a double win in the Imperial College Science in Medicine competition. Teams from Concord won both the Heart Category with their "Optogenetic Pacemaker" project and the Lung Category with "Air Patch" designed to help in asthma care.

BOYS BOARDING

From January 2025, Sibford in Oxfordshire, will open a second boarding house for boys. Penn House will be for Years 7 to 13 and is undergoing renovation to ensure a comfortable living environment. Sibford School offers full, weekly and flexi boarding options for students from age 11.



> *"The only advice... is to not be that person giving out unsolicited advice based on your own personal experience"*
>
> **TAYLOR SWIFT**

SOMETHING THEY SAID

"WHAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT COLLABORATIONS IS THE POSSIBILITY **FOR ONE PLUS ONE TO EQUAL THREE**"

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CAMBRIDGE

SCIENCE LIVE

Dame Maggie Aderin-Pocock and Professor Brian Cox have joined with The Royal Society in the latest round of Brian Cox School Experiments. Designed for students aged 11-14, the videos are located on the Royal Society's YouTube channel and explore robotics for astronauts, microplastic pollution, and green energy for sustainability.

CALIFORNIA SINGING

Cathedral Choristers from CCCS, Oxford went on tour to California at the end of the summer term, singing at concerts, services and alumni events in LA, San Francisco, Palo Alto and Monterey. "The boys sang brilliantly throughout," says Sophie Biddell, Director of Music.

> **"The boys sang brilliantly throughout," says Sophie Biddell, Director of Music**

CREATIVE OUTLET

Students at Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate (QE) gained firsthand experience from experts in the creative industry in a day of workshops from NM Productions – which is led by former QE student Anissa Payne. Workshops included direction, storyboards, makeup and special effects, plus set design.

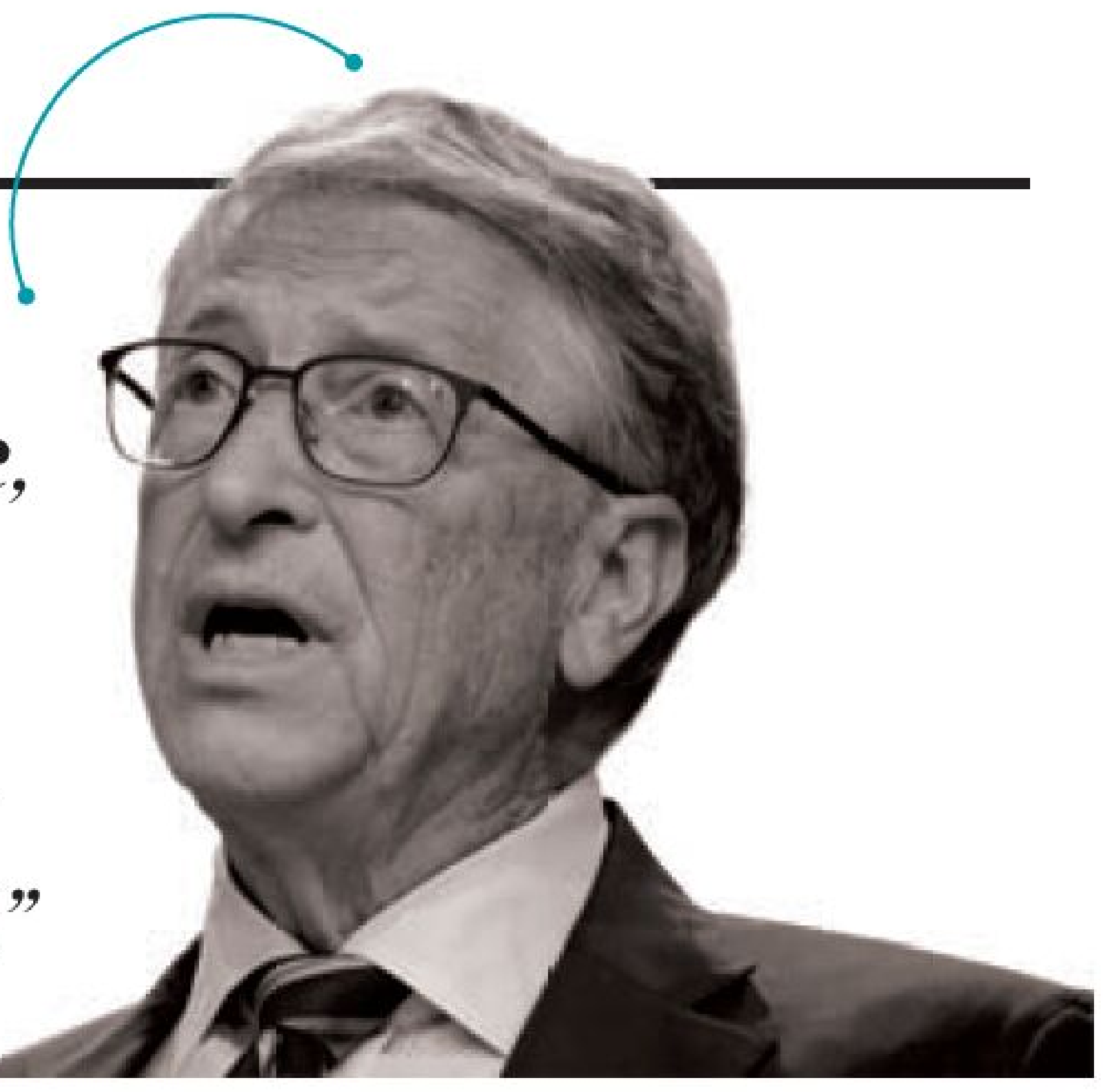
OUTDOOR SCHOOL

The Downs Malvern's outdoor programme – with smallholding, farming club, market garden and fruit-tree planting – helped it scoop Small Independent School of the Year award, with its TDM Baccalaureate also receiving praise. The prep won Best Wildlife Garden at the RHS Spring Show and a Best Eco Initiative recently.

Worth welcome

It's been an exciting start to the academic year for Worth School. The Catholic co-ed located between London and Brighton welcomed Marisa Bosa as Senior Deputy. It is also celebrating two recent accolades as a Best Boarding School of the Year finalist and for Best Alumni Mentoring.

> *"The belief that the world is getting worse, that we can't solve extreme poverty and disease, isn't just mistaken. It is harmful"*
>
> BILL GATES



SOMETHING THEY SAID

MUCH AS TALENT COUNTS, **EFFORT COUNTS TWICE"**

ANGELA DUCKWORTH

GREAT BRITAIN
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Olympic alumni

Four Ballard School, Hampshire alumni competed at the Paris Olympics. Rower Matt Aldridge won bronze in the men's coxless fours. Emma Wilson (pictured) won her second windsurfing bronze in the iQFoil class. Sailor Hannah Snellgrove won two ILCA class races in her sailing debut, while Tim Nurse played for Team GB hockey.

Grand performance

Hanford Year 7 pupil Fleur won the final of the Shetland Pony Grand National at the recent Moreton Show. Fleur was also named 'Rider of the Day'. She was cheered on by her team, Cherhill Shetlands, which races all over the country to raise money. This year's charity is the Bob Champion Cancer Trust.

SHETLAND PONY Grand National
SHETLAND PONY Grand National
SHETLAND PONY Grand National
HOLMANS

WELLBEING HUB

Mayfield School welcomed back former pupil and Olympic rowing champion Emily Craig to open its new Wellbeing Centre, St Raphael's. The centre is a hub for support, with nurses, a counsellor and Wellbeing and Pastoral teams on site. She spent the day with students, sharing her Olympic journey, from narrowly missing out in Tokyo to a Gold in Paris.

ROSES SELECTION

Year 13 Berkhamsted student Evie L has been selected for the England Netball Roses Academy for the 2024/25 season. She is one of only 23 selected for regular training camps in Loughborough. These are led by Roses Pathway Head Coach Sonia Mkoloma and support athletes on the journey to being potential senior England internationals.

> **"Evie is one of only 23 students selected for netball training camps in Loughborough"**

> *"You can't live someone else's expectations in life. It's a recipe for disaster"*
>
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THE GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

St. David's College,Gloddaeth Hall, Llandudno LL30 1RD

ABOVE *Pupils at Queen Ethelburga's*

Best in CLASS

*The Faculty of **Queen Ethelburga's** takes the win for ISA Senior School of the Year*

The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's, one of the two senior schools from Year 10-13 at Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate, has been awarded the prestigious title of Independent Schools Association - Senior School of the Year. The ISA Awards are held annually, celebrating success in independent education and they recognise the breadth and quality of provision within the sector.

QE Faculty combines academic excellence with the opportunity to also pursue a more vocational and creative approach to studies and aspirations. QE Faculty offers both A Levels and BTECs giving a diverse and flexible curriculum.

Speaking of the awards, the ISA judge's comments were as follows: "QE Faculty wins this award because its application shows the clear cause and effect between a range of innovatory strategies and the intended outcomes in two areas of the Faculty's work. The flexibility of a twin A level and BTEC qualification offer, the provision of structured opportunities for developing excellence in sport and dramatic arts, and the innovatory Esports BTEC provide excellent opportunities for students with diverse backgrounds….. to excel. The use of several student profiles to showcase the effectiveness of QE's approach was highly effective."

This flexibility within the QE Faculty curriculum allows students the time and the opportunity to pursue community action, or to invest increased time in an area of particular talent. A specific example is allowing A Level students performing to a high level in sport to have time built into the curriculum, which provides them with structured opportunities to dedicate time to their sport by accessing the incredible Performance Sport Pathway. The impact of this decision, which gives students in Year 12 an additional five hours a week for their sporting development alongside four AS levels, means they have a high level of aspiring athletes within the QE Faculty student cohort. The importance of providing each student with a curriculum that suits their interests and talents leads to strong outcomes for the students academically. QE Faculty supports the aspirations and ambitions of all of its students from Oxbridge applications, to professional sport, to entrepreneurship, to performing on the stage. QE

Faculty aims to get the best from students by finding an academic pathway that brings out the best in them, in whatever area that may be.

ISA senior schools are among the best in the country. To be the ISA Senior School of the Year, applicants had to demonstrate how the school makes a positive difference to the outcomes of the pupils in its care. The QE Faculty philosophy has a fixed focus on academic excellence and preparation for the future but with an emphasis on maintaining a sense of creativity and fun – and gives more options to students, their individual talents and how they want to shape their personal development during their time at QE.

The award comes hot on the heels of Queen Ethelburga's College, the second QE Senior School, taking sixth place in The Telegraph Best Private Schools in the UK by A Level Results 2024 and The Times Independent School Exam Results.

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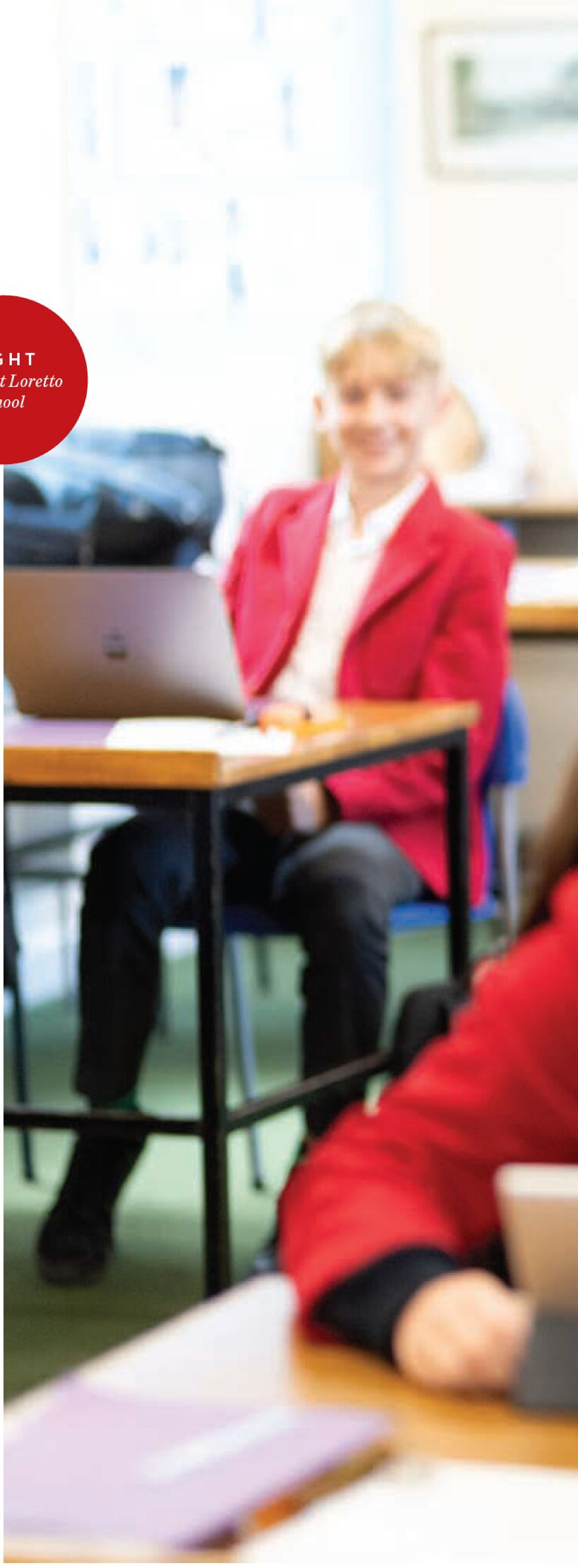
Focus

SCHOOLDAYS IN SCOTLAND 22 GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS 25

LORETTO

Why a British Education in Scotland is an excellent option for international students.

See page 22


RIGHT *Pupils at Loretto School*

NORTH *of* *the* BORDER

Scotland offers the best of British education in beautiful and distincitive settings, says Peter Richardson, Head of ***Loretto School*** *in Edinburgh*

For those considering an international education, British schools are incredibly appealing. The education system is widely regarded as one of the best in the world, with high academic standards and a comprehensive curriculum. It's natural to be drawn to independent schools located in England, perhaps viewing these as quintessentially British. However, by expanding your search slightly further to include Scotland, your child can experience the best of British, in addition to Scotland's unique heritage, and the prestige of an education within the UK.

Having moved to the United Kingdom 20 years ago from my native South Africa, spending 12 of those in Scotland, and working in independent schools throughout this time, I like to think I'm well versed in the country, in terms of both education and culture. While Scotland has its own exam board, several schools elect to follow the English examination system – Loretto being one of them. This system presents students with greater choice and flexibility, and the chance to study at a level that suits them, whether BTEC, GCSE, or A Level, translating to academic excellence and the development of interests. These qualifications are held in high esteem globally and symbolise the exceptional achievements of students. This is especially evident as students embark on life after school – each year, our leavers are presented with a wealth of opportunities, both within the UK and internationally. In an increasingly competitive world, holding such highly valued qualifications proves to be of the utmost importance.

Scotland has a diverse landscape, with beaches, lochs, and dramatic mountains being key features, inspiring all who lay their eyes upon them. In addition to being undeniably beautiful, research suggests that access to the outdoors is advantageous to the wellbeing, development, and educational attainment of young people. Increasingly, independent schools are expanding their outdoor learning provisions, taking advantage of all that the natural environment has to offer. Being a relatively small country means that you're never too far from the hustle and bustle of fantastic and distinct cities steeped in history, stunning architecture, and culture. Scotland hosts a variety of musical, arts, and sporting events. Every summer, there are eight festivals that take place in Edinburgh alone, including the world's largest arts festival, The Fringe.

Having a balance between these two environments can be incredibly positive for young people. They can appreciate the serenity of the countryside and peace of mind that this brings, whilst city trips stir excitement and fuel curiosity. For students in Scotland, the best of both worlds is very much a reality – and an accessible one at that.

RIGHT *Pete Richardson, Head, Loretto School*

The country's traditions are equally as beautiful as its locations. Days of celebration, including Burns Night and Hogmanay, ceilidhs soundtracked by the distinctive sound of the bagpipes, and culinary delights all add to the excitement of studying in Scotland. So proud of the nation's heritage, schools today are enthusiastic to immerse their students in special events to gain a deeper understanding of the country, proving key to the integration of international students into their new home. Despite this strong sense of patriotism, the Scots' ability to embrace other cultures is not inhibited – rather the opposite. Scotland is known for embracing individuals from all backgrounds, appreciating the vibrancy that this brings, and Loretto is no different. We warmly welcome 25 nationalities, representing the makeup of the country and giving students a global perspective that opens them up to the opportunities of the modern world.

For students with a passion for movement, there really is no greater place to study. Independent schools offer varied sports programmes, whether as part of the curriculum or as co-curricular activities, including sports that were invented and developed in Scotland. Perhaps most well-known are the country's ties to golf, with the game being established here in the Middle Ages. With over 500 courses around the country, golfers are spoilt for choice. To make the most of this fantastic offering and play to the best of their abilities, young people require excellent training facilities. That's why we established the first Golf Performance Centre within an independent school in 2002. Students are coached by five experienced PGA professionals within innovative facilities and enjoy proximity to some of the finest courses along Scotland's Golf Coast – a winning combination that results in outstanding players. Whichever sport your child is passionate about, Scotland is not short of schools with the means and opportunities for them to flourish.

Throughout history, Scotland has been at the forefront of technology and innovation. From the ATM to the telephone, several inventions that revolutionised the world have their roots here. Independent schools combine tradition with modernity, encouraging creative thinking, while still giving students the experience of an esteemed education within a British institution. Great minds are made in Scotland – let your child be next.

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Pupils at RGS Guildford

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__RGS Guildford__ on the powerful partnerships successfully forged internationally to bring a top-flight education to more young people

One of the biggest decisions a family will make is where to educate their children. A long-standing dilemma for many parents has been whether or not to send their children overseas to benefit from a world-renowned international education. With a number of well-respected British schools expanding overseas, parents now have the choice of benefitting from a first-class British curriculum much closer to home.

For organisations such as Royal Grammar School (RGS) Guildford, these alliances go far beyond a British curriculum, high quality teaching and academic success. They foster a deeper understanding of global cultures, enhance the quality of education, and prepare students for a more interconnected and global future.

With over 500 years of history, RGS Guildford is one of the oldest schools in the UK and is well known for its academic excellence. Its students secure places on highly competitive degree courses at top UK universities. It is also a school that 10 years ago took the decision to expand and has successfully established four schools overseas. Now, there are over 4,000 students within the RGS family.

Bob Ukiah, Chief Executive of RGS Guildford International, says that UK schools can offer many benefits to investors interested in opening schools internationally. “We are tremendously proud to have created thriving schools in Dubai, Qatar, Oman and China. Together with our home school in Guildford, we are an established, successful and flourishing family. All our schools receive impressive inspection reports from the local education authorities, including in Dubai, where RGS Guildford Dubai received the first ever and highest possible ‘Very good’ rating on its initial inspection.”

He adds: “Our family of schools bring together the best of RGS Guildford and local cultures to deliver a market-leading international education for students in every country”. RGS Guildford International believes that a successful expansion overseas is the result of several factors – beginning with well-matched investment partners. This relies on a genuine partnership with investors who have experience of, and an interest in, building and operating premium British international schools in new territories.

Continued involvement and collaboration between the school and operational investor, during the development phase and once open, is essential to ensure that schools thrive in their local markets. Shared values and ethos are also critical. This guarantees that, despite the distance between them, there is a strong and consistent sense of what it means to be part of the RGS. It’s a process of continuous collaboration and the community comes together with a wide variety of collaborative events, activities and learning opportunities. Trips between RGS schools take place regularly and the many nationalities of students are celebrated with an International Day. RGS Guildford International’s vision is to bring the benefits of an RGS Guildford education to an even wider audience, so that more young people can benefit.

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UNREGULATED CHILDHOOD

The Head Master of ***Rugby School*** *on why regulated phone use and unregulated time to play, learn and socialise are vital for our young people*

ABOVE *Rugby School students*

I recently attended a meeting with 15 CEOs from diverse industries. They were collectively bemoaning the work habits of their Gen Z staff. As the only educationalist in the room, I was blamed for shortcomings in the education system and for its failure to produce sufficiently robust employees. The conversation was a jovial one and in more serious moments they did speak positively about this particular age group. Nevertheless, the conversation did bring to mind Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*.

Haidt's book makes two key points. First, unregulated access to smartphones has done and continues to do significant damage to children. Second, a culture of 'safetyism', developed over more than 40 years, has produced children who have been mollycoddled and, as a result, are reluctant to take part in adventurous play or to seize opportunities where an element of risk is involved.

Haidt's verdict on smartphones has attracted the most column inches and it is reassuring that most schools have now imposed restrictions on their use. The impact of 'safetyism' has received less attention, but is equally important. Many children born in this millennium have experienced a childhood where perceived risks in the real world have been greatly exaggerated, while the genuine risks of the online world have been ignored.

Schools like Rugby provide an antidote to these two modern problems. Smartphones have long been banned from our classrooms, with strict limits on mobile phone use outside the classroom. This allows our students to have more face-to-face interactions with each other and to engage wholeheartedly, and without electronic interruption, in the adventurous group activities where they learn the skills which are so important for making the most of life at school and for thriving after school.

> **"Perceived risks in the real world have been greatly exaggerated, while risks of the online world have been ignored"**

Just as important are the opportunities for the students to have fun and spend unregulated time with each other, busy or not. We have more than 30 student bands, each of which has to find the time to practise and manage the dynamics of group performance. There are informal games of sport long into the summer evenings. Students are learning about collaboration, managing their reactions, forging real-time friendships, discovering what they are good at and what they like doing – without other-world distraction.

We can safely and confidently provide these opportunities, organised or not, because we are a full boarding school with the time and space to educate beyond the classroom. Perhaps the most important element of a full boarding school is the House system. Our boarding houses have approximately 50 students with 10 in each year group.

There is something magical in the way that 10 students who come together at the age of 13 learn – despite, or perhaps because of, the inevitable squabbles and conflicts – how to live together successfully in a community and absorb the vital life skills that transport them beyond the Gen Z stereotypes presented by my CEO friends.

GARETH PARKER-JONES
Head Master
Rugby School

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ONE JOURNEY

William Brierly of ***Claremont Fan Court School*** *on the benefits and pleasures of a single location throughout your school days*

ABOVE *Claremont Fan Court School students*

> **"Importantly for an all-through school, working together provides opportunities for mentorship – which supports the youngest and enhances the soft skills of the eldest"**

For the first time in my career, this September, all my school-going children and even my wife will be at the school I lead as Head. Admittedly two of my four are now at university, but I am excited by the prospect of only needing one car and having the same holidays. However, as I commence my seventh year as head of a school that previously had 700 pupils and now has 1,200, my real drive for a single journey is not about the Peugeot 5008, but rather to optimise the learning experience of our pupils, who range in age from 2 to 18.

While our historic 100-acre site has its very own folly, a mini castle called The Belvedere (with beauty but little practical use), I was more conscious that the pre-prep, prep and senior school felt like three little communities – metaphorical castles of their own.

It is rare for parents not to see an all-through school as a single school, but it is very easy for its constituent parts to work in silos. Schools need character and there should always be something refreshing about the next step in a learning journey. But it is easy to overlook the synergies and opportunities of sharing best practice and overlapping planning in making the journey better still.

Claremont has a fantastic flair for creativity, to complement its success in science, the humanities (I could go on). And yet this had been an area where the youngest had not had the benefit of specialist teachers. I could say the same for gymnastics, where our seniors were placed second nationally in the four-piece recently, or about lacrosse. Looking the other way around, our youngest had the benefits of an exciting forest school yet we had not been guiding as many pupils to study degrees in environmental science as you might expect. Thankfully, coding and computing has always been a strength across the site, as are the traditional core subjects, but you can see my point.

One school journey enables the youngest to find their feet in a myriad of opportunities that they can pursue to become world leaders in if that is their wish. More importantly still for an all-through school, working together provides opportunities for mentorship – which supports the youngest and enhances the soft skills of the eldest. There's also mindfulness. For instance, helping much younger groups in a tranquil and non-intimidating forest school at lunchtime can be invaluable for a child who might otherwise find school overwhelming.

When we first introduced vertical tutor groups into the senior school, people worried whether the interaction of different ages would be beneficial and safe, but it quickly became clear to all that while the lion's share of schooling is rightly within a single age-group, the sense of community, empathy, and more broadminded understanding we all gain from working with other groups offers a brilliant education in its own right.

When we take our biannual school photo with the backdrop of the historic mansion it can test the patience to get the very youngest sat down when our ever-growing sixth form have been at the top of the steps for some time, but the outcome speaks volumes. Understanding others is what makes a community.

WILLIAM BRIERLY
Headmaster
Claremont Fan Court School

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Prep

BUILDING RESILIENCE P. 32 SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE P. 38

GOOD READS

Library time at St Catherine's Prep School, Bramley

BUILDING

resilience

Resilience is a buzz word in education, so how can we help younger children to build confidence and take setbacks in their stride? Schools share their winning strategies

ABOVE *New Hall School pupils test themselves in outdoor learning*

NEW HALL SCHOOL

At New Hall in Oxford, the team work to create a culture where mistakes are seen as an integral part of the learning process. Younger pupils are taught that failure is not something to fear, but an opportunity to grow. Teachers emphasise that it's normal to get things wrong and that the most important thing is the effort pupils put into trying again. This is reinforced through classroom discussions, collaborative problem-solving tasks and stories where characters succeed after persevering. Staff employ a growth mindset approach, helping children understand that their abilities can develop through persistence.

To help children identify and build on strengths, they employ a mixture of approaches, including one-to-one teacher discussions, peer assessments, and self-reflection exercises. New Hall pupils are encouraged to think critically about their abilities, what they enjoy, and where they excel. Then teachers help them set achievable goals based on these strengths, gradually building on small successes. The team here find that strengths-based learning is a great way to celebrate individual progress (rather than comparisons to others). This also fosters intrinsic motivation – pupils see the effort they put in leading on to improvement.

Sport and outdoor learning are part of the toolbox for building resilience. Whether it's on the playing field, visits to the school farm or outdoor adventures, the activities help children push through challenges, manage frustration when they can't 'get it right' and also work within a team. The New Hall team say that outdoor environments present unique opportunities to fail safely and try again. They also foster problem-solving skills, risk-taking, and adaptability – supporting both wellbeing and mental resilience.

There is strong emphasis here on recognising not just academic success, but also perseverance, curiosity, and personal progress. Reward systems are designed to celebrate the process of learning, valuing effort over achievement to help pupils understand why hard work and determination are as important as reaching the end goal. This approach motivates pupils to keep pushing through learning barriers, even when the going gets tough.

Fostering a supportive community where every child feels valued and encouraged is vital, say New Hall. Mindfulness practices and emotional literacy are integral parts of the school curriculum, helping children manage stress and navigate challenges. Opportunities for leadership – from being a prefect to participating in School Council – let them take on responsibility and shine in multiple ways.

ABOVE *Forest school at Bickley Park*

BELOW *Games build confidence at Kew College Prep*

KEW COLLEGE PREP

At Kew College Prep, the team understand that many children feel nervous about making mistakes, which can hold them back from exploring new opportunities. There's a big focus on nurturing self-esteem – showing even the youngest and most timid pupils that mistakes aren't something to fear, but an essential part of the learning process.

Prep staff say that a supportive and tight-knit community is critical to this. Teachers focus on building strong, trusting relationships with each child, using praise to create a space where the children feel able to try new things. Whether they're tackling a challenging maths problem, performing on stage, or competing in sports, pupils are encouraged to believe in themselves and their potential.

One of the ways a 'tryer' mentality is modelled is through sticky questions – where there isn't a clear right or wrong answer. These spark open discussions and encourage critical thinking, helping children to see that the journey of figuring things out is as important as the solution. By exploring different viewpoints, they also learn to embrace uncertainty and recognise the value in trial and error.

Teachers model this mindset by openly demonstrating how they handle their own mistakes and learn from them, reminding pupils that nobody is perfect. This gives children the confidence to step outside their comfort zones and keep going, even when things get tough or go wrong. In PSHE lessons, resilience is a regular theme, helping each child recognise their strengths and celebrate their progress.

The concept of a growth mindset is also introduced, teaching that just because something feels hard now doesn't mean it will always be that way. This helps pupils to approach challenges with patience and determination. Achievements are celebrated via regular assemblies, where pupil successes, both in and out of school, are shared with the school.

Beyond the classroom, outdoor learning environments – including forest school sessions – offer even more opportunities to build resilience. From climbing trees to using tools for woodwork, Nursery and Reception children engage in 'risky play' which fosters independence and a can-do attitude.

The Kew Collee Prep team note that praise, reward, and recognition are

"A 'TRYER' MENTALITY IS MODELLED THROUGH STICKY QUESTIONS – WHERE THERE ISN'T A CLEAR RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWER"

BELOW
Christ Church Cathedral School pupils explore outdoors

essential to helping children push beyond their perceived limits. Positive feedback, house points, and awards celebrate not only top achievements but also the effort it takes to overcome hurdles. With problem-solving, sports, and mindfulness embedded within the curriculum, pupils have the tools needed to be resilient and confident learners.

> "CLASSROOM TALK OFTEN REFERENCES 'BOUNCE-ABILITY' – HOW DO WE GET BACK UP AFTER SOMETHING IS TOO DIFFICULT?"

THE KING ALFRED SCHOOL

At The King Alfred School (KAS) in North London, Head of Lower School Karen Thomas says we adults need to resist our natural tendency to protect the children in our care at all costs as it's not in their best interests. "It does little to equip them with the tools and strategies they need to live healthy, happy lives," she says. "Understanding what to do when faced with adversity is woven into the fabric of our educational provision," she adds. "We place as much value on how we learn as what we learn."

The KAS approach is that a shared language and an expectation for children to review themselves as learners is key to developing effective learning dispositions, including resilience. "By helping children identify, understand and expect the feelings we get when something challenges us, we start to disperse the mystery of the learning process, allowing children to be curious and brave rather than afraid when they are not immediately successful."

The concept of "productive struggle" is introduced to the youngest children as an important indicator that learning is happening. In the Early Years, for instance, resilience is also addressed through books – KAS favourites include *Tilda Tries Again*, *After the Fall* and *Yes You Can, Cow*. Together, teachers and children analyse characters' emotions and actions from the safety of the story corner and this helps pupils to make links to their own learning experiences.

"Classroom talk often references 'bounce-ability' – how do we get back up after something is too difficult? We teach the children the science of learning – how their brain can grow and strengthen when they take risks, learn new skills, solve problems, and make mistakes," says Karen Thomas. "We talk with children about having a growth mindset, scaffolding their approach to challenge with a positive mental attitude."

Above all else, helping children become resilient relies on teachers and caregivers really knowing each child. "When we know their different strengths, experiences and levels of confidence, we are able to provide the right level of challenge at school in terms of the learning experiences we design," says Karen Thomas "We help children to identify when something is too easy, too hard or just right, so that they can exercise their 'resilience muscle' safe in the knowledge that that we will be there to champion their efforts, to cheer them on or to offer a helping hand."

ABOVE
Pupils at The King Alfred School are taught to see failure as part of the learning journey

BICKLEY PARK SCHOOL

"Perseverance is a key School value here at Bickley Park," says Headmaster Tom Quilter. "We aim to model and promote the benefits of a growth mindset, embracing the concept that failure is a key part of success. Imagine, if as babies, we gave up the first time we fell? We would never learn to walk. Some of my favourite assemblies, centre on the theme of learning to pick ourselves back up."

The Bromley prep and pre-prep loves to remind children that it's not that they can't do it, they just can't do it yet. "We are determined to make sure that we identify, nurture and celebrate every child's strengths and talents. By finding that spark – ensuring efforts are rewarded and then celebrating achievement – we see self-esteem snowball," adds Tom Quilter.

The curriculum is framed around what are known as the Four Quadrants of Learning – Academics, Sport & Outdoor, Arts plus Community. "Together they arm our pupils with skills for life – a love of learning; the ability to communicate confidently; the desire to contribute meaningfully to society and to show initiative; resilience, teamwork and the confidence to take risks."

Sport & Outdoor is especially key to developing resilience and confidence, with sport sitting alongside a Forest and Adventure School programme. "We aim to foster teamwork and leadership skills, whilst developing independence and the ability to manage risk," adds the Head. "And we believe in sport for all – for example, ensuring that all pupils are exposed to healthy competition and can represent the school throughout their time with us."

The Adventure School programme builds on forest school sessions and sees all children in Years 3 -8 taking part in residential trips which focus on progressively demanding skills and challenges – from camping in the Peak District and the South Downs to a kayaking adventure along the Cornish coast.

In all of these adventures, Tom Quilter believes it's important to foster a culture where pupils recognise the importance of supporting and looking out for others. "We foster kindness, inclusion and respect in everything that we do," he says. "We pride ourselves in being a kind school that celebrates and embraces diversity."

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

At CCCS in Oxford, the boys are encouraged to 'give things a go', says Deputy Head (Pastoral) Nick Harrison. "From a young age through lessons, assemblies and play times we try to instil the belief that giving things a go and getting them wrong is much better than shying away from difficult situations. Our teaching staff are careful not to discourage our pupils from raising their hands during lesson time, even if they think they are wrong."

There's a new enrichment programme at the prep, which helps to reinforce this by giving boys the chance to take part in activities they wouldn't normally do. "Our hope is that, through this programme, we can continue to increase our boys' resilience and increase their opportunities to explore activities they might enjoy and find challenging."

Alongside enrichment, PHSE is used to help guide pupils to understand their strengths and weaknesses. "We find this an invaluable process that enables them to enjoy the experience of being good at something alongside the challenge of improving at something else," says Nick Harrison.

Sport and wellbeing are a big part of school life, despite the school's city central location. "We make sure our pupils know that they are in a privileged position to be able to play on such wonderful playing fields (Christ Church Meadows) and take part in woodland activities whilst still being in the heart of Oxford." Pre-Prep pupils have dedicated Woodland School lessons, now being introduced through to Year 8 as part of enrichment. "We are able to reinforce key messages that help to build resilience and help with their general wellbeing," adds Nick Harrison.

In common with many schools, there's a focus on effort-based praise. "We firmly believe that if our pupils focus on trying their best, rather than achieving the best mark, there is no ceiling to their learning. We find this attitude often leads to more resilient children and ultimately excellent results when testing in a more formal manner."

CCCS is also a small school, with a family feel, so children are known. And it has a linear pastoral system, where older children visit younger classes, especially during Form time. "We find this 'buddy system' gives boys the opportunity to speak to a range of ages and helps them to feel included and nurtured at every level." Ⓣ

> "IF OUR PUPILS FOCUS ON TRYING THEIR BEST, RATHER THAN THE BEST MARK, THERE IS NO CEILING TO THEIR LEARNING"

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Looking AHEAD

***Framlingham College** in Suffolk on why delivering skills to help children grow and thrive in future life is as important as academic results*

As education requirements continue to evolve in response to an ever-changing world, schools are rethinking not only what they teach but how they assess learning and potential in their young people. At Framlingham College – a day and boarding through school in Suffolk – the focus is on developing good human beings, not just delivering stellar academic results. Principal, Louise North says: “Academic achievement should be viewed as a byproduct of the educational experience rather than the sole measure of a successful education”. This philosophy reflects a broader shift in education, as schools and parents question the longstanding reliance on traditional testing systems, such as Common Entrance (CE) and GCSEs, as the best way to assess pupils.

“The role of education in the 21st century goes far beyond memorising facts and regurgitating them in exams. In today’s fast-paced, technology-driven world, the skills, knowledge and understanding that our young people need are rapidly changing,” says Louise North.

The World Economic Forum has noted that employers are looking for a skillset that encompasses creative and analytical thinking, resilience, technological literacy, and emotional intelligence. At Framlingham, these habits are embedded into educational provision, with the focus on encouraging pupils to be ambitious, nimble and creative in their thinking, and to embrace change rather than fear it. “As educators, we must ensure that our educational provision evolves to reflect the future adult world of our pupils, equipping them with the skills, confidence and resilience that they are going to need.”

This, adds Louise North, also impacts the whole approach to teaching. “The

Framlingham
COLLEGE

BELOW
Preparing pupils for the world beyond school

ABOVE & LEFT *Building teamwork, collaboration and intellectual curiosity is a key focus of learning at Framlingham College*

> **“The role of educators is increasingly to teach young people how to acquire and apply knowledge, and why it is relevant”**

traditional role of teachers as omniscient figures imparting knowledge has changed significantly. In an era where information is readily available at the touch of a screen and AI is ever more present in all that we do, the role of educators is increasingly to teach young people how to acquire and apply knowledge, and why it is relevant to life beyond the classroom.”

One area where Framlingham College has reflected the changing nature of life beyond the classroom is in Years 7–9. Having abandoned Common Entrance, the curriculum has been reshaped to focus on building a love of learning and an intellectual curiosity. This means the curriculum takes a thematic approach to learning, developing skills such as collaboration and creative thinking, independent research and oral presentation skills. It also focuses on ensuring that pupils make connections between their subjects – learning Music through Maths or Geography through Biology, for example.

“We understand the pressures that young people face, especially when preparing for senior school entrance testing. These are pressures that can significantly reduce their spirit of enquiry and love of learning,” says Head of Framlingham College Prep School, Simon Roche. “As an all-through school, we are fortunate to be able to create a shared and seamless learning journey from Prep to Senior, through a curriculum that develops skills and resilience, while also ensuring that the joy that comes from deepening knowledge is kept alive.”

To assist with keeping that knowledge development alive, Framlingham College uses a combination of teaching methods, including project-based learning, experiential learning, and traditional instruction. This supports teachers to deliver rigorous and purposeful lessons, where pupils are encouraged to see ‘a bigger picture’ and spot interrelationships between themes. “Our integrated approach to learning reduces many of the stresses of transitioning from Prep to Senior, giving pupils the confidence they need to succeed without feeling overwhelmed by the process,” adds Simon Roche.

Framlingham College Principal Louise North adds that now, more than ever, schools need look to the future and prepare young people to thrive. “Education should be about more than just exam results, and pupils should not be defined purely by their performance in a narrow set of assessments. Instead, the focus should be on preparing them for the world beyond school – one where creativity, resilience, and the ability to adapt to change will be essential.”

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Senior

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SUPER SCIENCE

Making science stick at Concord College

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]

SUPER SCIENCE

*Curricular, cross-curricular off campus or offbeat, what are the innovative approaches schools use to engage students with science – for both study and future careers? **British Education** speaks to four schools that use clever approaches to bring these subjects to life*

Tonbridge School

"If we're not reaching for real-world examples of science in our lessons, then we are missing half the fun", says Nick Waite, Head of Science at Tonbridge School. "It's the hands-on experiments and relatable examples that make science stand out, sparking curiosity in ways that other subjects can't match."

The goal here is to ensure every lesson includes an exciting experiment or memorable demonstration to "anchor" theory in life. "Whether it's exploring diseases in biology, thrilling explosions in chemistry, or the high-speed world of Formula 1 in physics, these real-world connections transform abstract concepts into something tangible." The school's superb Science Centre is designed to ignite curiosity, featuring displays, challenging questions and posters about past projects.

Students here are often on their feet, collaborating, problem-solving, and presenting solutions on the whiteboards spanning the walls of labs. "By integrating technology – whether it's using ChatGPT as a virtual study companion, tackling online question banks, or exploring YouTube – we empower our students to dive deeper, expanding their understanding and making learning an adventure," says Nick Waite.

Tonbridge became the first school to earn 'Employer Champion' status from the Science Council, in recognition of its commitment to staff training and professional development. And in September, the school's Senior Chemistry Technician received the Hauksbee Award from the Royal Society for her contribution to sparking scientific curiosity and driving collaboration across schools. "Our educators are not only experts in their fields but also pioneers in delivering cutting-edge, engaging STEM experiences for our students."

Cross-curricular approaches are a big part of bringing science to life. From constructing model rockets to learning about the iterative design improvements required in engineering, there are multiple real-world opportunities. External speakers are a big part of the mix and students also deliver presentations to their peers, as well as producing a school science magazine. The school's annual science conference – now in its 20th year – brings together over 20 different schools. Visitors from Japan and California have been among participants in recent years. There's a science communication competition, now in its third year, that Nick Waite says is proving to be an excellent platform for young people across London and the south-east to articulate big ideas persuasively and coherently. 'These activities not only deepen scientific knowledge but also cultivate essential skills."

Many students here choose STEM subjects at university, and careers-related activities are designed to showcase their versatility. "They highlight the value of studying STEM subjects, not just for those pursuing science-based careers but also as a foundation for critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation," adds Nick Waite.

Stephen Perse Cambridge

Head of Science and Biology Alexander Van Dijk says Stephen Perse's Cambridge location – surrounded by innovative companies – is a real boon for selling science's real-world applications. The school makes good use of local resources by taking students to events around the city. Recent examples include a 'Physics at Work' educational outreach event at the Cavendish Laboratory, trips to the city's Museum of Zoology and to the school's own nature reserve. There, students get involved with 'live' science.

ABOVE *Live science is prioritised at Tonbridge School*

"We have set up semi-permanent quadrats to allow the tracking of species diversity over time and analysis of the impact of mowing on the sedge," says Alexander Van Dijk.

Extracurricular activities are encouraged – helping to build problem-solving and critical thinking skills as well as make science enjoyable. "Our TeenTech club has inspired students to achieve incredible things, including one student who designed a new music curation model and a team that investigated how we can use AI to help with garden design and maintenance."

Science Extension sessions enable students to meet weekly to discuss a wide range of topics – from de-extinction to the science of tanning. "One particularly engaging cross-curricular activity saw our science students visit RAF Henlow in collaboration with the languages department, where our budding engineers were able to design a space station in one of three modern foreign languages." Students participate in Olympiad competitions and use IsaacPhysics to reinforce their studies – one student even earned a place at a University of Cambridge summer school as one of the top 50 school physics students in the country.

Thanks to the school's science-centric location, there are regular talks from the

ABOVE
Insights into medical sciences and (left) collaboration on an experiment at The Duke of York's Royal Military School in Kent

parent body. "The majority of our students studying science at A level go on to study related university courses, but even those who don't will have developed key critical thinking skills that will stand them in good stead," says Alexander Van Dijk.

They also consider career possibilities beyond the obvious. "Students recently heard from scientific organisation Costello Medical, which highlighted the science and medicine careers available for arts and humanities students, such as medical communications and compliance."

Concord College

With a superb science building at the heart of its Shropshire campus, Concord College is focused on future opportunities for its student cohort from the moment they arrive. "Part of our vision for science at Concord College is to inspire students to become the scientists of the future," says Head of Science Barry Brown. When they first arrive at Concord, Year 9 (F3) students complete a seven-week neuroscience of learning course. The aim is to use science to become a more effective learner.

"They experience a wealth of practical investigations leading to two opportunities to complete a British Science Association CREST Award, working in collaborative groups to solve a real-world problem," adds Barry Brown.

There are 30 science teachers at Concord, and the school also invites scientists from academia and industry in to speak. Students experience higher-level study by attending university lectures, and with insights via industry links, too. "For example, we are forging a link with Ricoh 3-D with our aspiring engineers." The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) that is a feature of sixth form life here is also a great forum for science investigation. Many students opt for a practical science-led investigation and the College's research lab is open every Monday night for four hours specifically for this purpose. Students are mentored by experienced teachers and have access to equipment such as 3-D printers, spectrometers and a muon detector.

The EPQ successes bear out the value of the facilities and support given to students. But they also pass on their wisdom and have both research and communication of findings tested in a 'live' situation. "Sixth Form students present their EPQ work and younger students are able to ask questions and learn about the breadth of applications of scientific research," says Assistant Principal (Student Futures) Diane Van Dongen.

Homegrown and student-led academic societies hold formal and informal meetings every week, supported by

"One student designed a new music curation model, and a team investigated how we can use AI in garden design and maintenance"

BELOW
Student investigation at Stephen Perse

ABOVE
Lab work at Concord College in Shropshire

staff. There are also areas where STEM comes together with humanities – for instance, in discussions on medical ethics or the economics of high-tech engineering companies. "Seeing the place that science plays in society and understanding that the society around us can affect the science we do are important for aspiring STEM students," says Diane Van Dongen.

The annual medical conference hosted at Concord College is now open to all aspiring medics in the region, with some elements available online. "It features visiting speakers, hands-on workshops and the chance to meet one-to-one with practicing doctors and staff from university medical schools," says Barry Brown.

The Engineering Society has followed suit, with an increasingly ambitious programme of lectures, visits, discussions and masterclasses, and there are also active groups for biochemistry and physics.

The buzz around science rubs off on everyone here. "With such student enthusiasm we are also able to involve many students studying non-STEM subjects in the wider discussion around science," says Diane Van Dongen.

"With so many careers even in apparently non-STEM fields making use of technologies such as IT or smart materials, it is important that science is part of everyone's knowledge landscape."

Duke Of York's Royal Military School

At DOYRMS in Kent, the science department is committed to building engagement with science through innovative programmes, state-of-the-art facilities, and hands-on learning experiences. One of the school's most prestigious initiatives is its participation in the Independent Research in Schools (IRIS) project. This enables students to undertake novel research projects and present their findings at academic conferences, mirroring processes that postgraduate researchers follow.

Students are also given the chance to compete in various STEM competitions, both locally and nationally. These include the Top of the Bench competition, organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry, which challenges young chemists to showcase their skills. The team here say that these opportunities not only boost students' scientific knowledge but also help them build confidence and experience in public speaking and presenting research to mixed-age audience – all useful stuff for future university and job interviews.

The school's team of science teachers includes many who previously held positions in industry and DOYRMS says this real-world experience brings a lived perspective to the classroom, ensuring that students are always thinking in terms of the latest advancements and their real-world value.

Collaboration is a key aspect of the science approach, helping to boost engagement. Teachers from different disciplines regularly share best practice and work together on cross-curricular projects – particularly with the maths department – to develop common approaches across the school.

Extracurricular activities play a significant role here, especially when it comes to building interest and knowledge in science. There are 60 diverse activities to choose from at the school, including VR and ecology clubs, as well as clubs related to the physics and chemistry Olympiads. The addition of regular laboratory days at a nearby science park's community lab, gives students practical and hands-on experience using industrial-grade equipment.

The DOYRMS team know that science engagement, both in and out of the classroom, throughout school days pays dividends when it comes to inspiring future STEM-related careers. Triple sciences are common through to A level here, and with many students heading off to university to study science and maths-related courses.

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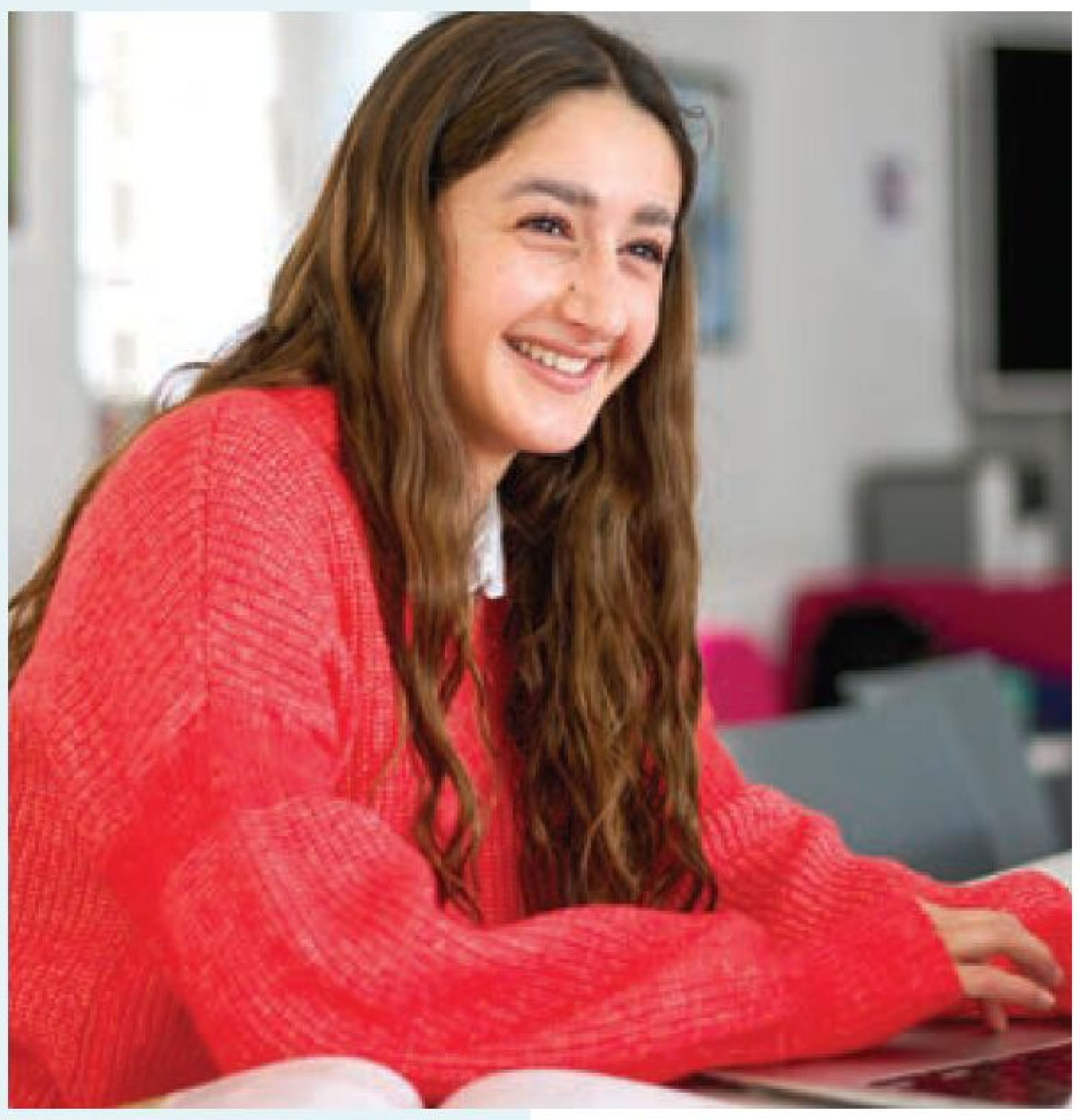
TAKE IT *personally*

A one-size-fits-all approach is no longer either relevant or desirable in our changing world, says Kevin Carson of ***RMS for Girls***

Where is your school at with personalising learning for every student, and just how accommodating should an individual teacher and a school be in this respect? By "personalising learning" I should clarify that I have in mind two key components: teachers knowing each student extremely well and then tailoring the provision to best suit each learner, their context, their strengths, needs, skills and interests; and schools providing students with choice, voice, and flexibility in reaching learning outcomes.

On the one hand, isn't the first of these what great teaching has always been? Certainly, the best teachers that I have known have always adapted their questions, support and feedback for each pupil in front of them. And yet on many occasions in my career, I have heard negative perceptions of personalised learning from teachers, with opponents of the idea decrying the possibility of adopting such measures, or claiming it has political motivations, is too woolly and fuzzy, or bemoaning that it's a nice idea but too challenging to put in place within the time pressures of term time and a prescriptive curriculum.

And yet, I sense the world is changing its attitude towards personalising learning, and this is for the better. My experience across five schools is that increasingly families and teachers appreciate that all children have learning differences, and some are more marked than others. Across the globe, there is a growing awareness that a one-size-fits-all approach to schooling is insufficient to meet learners' needs or those of society at large.



ABOVE & BELOW
Photographs show pupils at RMS for Girls

As headteacher, I'm seeing examples of personalised learning every day, in manifold, varied ways, big and small, and it delights me that all students' needs are being met, that every pupil is being given the chance to thrive. With our youngest students, in Nursery and pre-school, if a child joins from overseas and largely as a non-native speaker, we create an auditory book of photographs and key phrases in their first language and English, we make home visits, adjust their timetable, and translate the texts we are using into their native language so that they too can enjoy 'The Hungry Caterpillar' alongside their new classmates.

In Senior School, our Social Communication Group is an important, well-established time for our neurodiverse students to meet, offload, and to share their strategies. This week younger students from Years 5 and 6 joined the group ahead of their transition into Senior School. Our most highly talented sports students are allowed to arrive late and to leave early for training, with lessons and timetables adapted around their training programmes. Similarly, in our Sixth Form, we don't require sixth formers to be here at 8:30am but instead give them the choice to arrive for whenever their first lesson of the day is to best fit their body clock and working patterns.

Thinking structurally, we have joined a number of schools in changing our GCSE offer to allow each student greater choice and flexibility about the subjects that they wish to study. We have reduced the number of compulsory, core subjects (Mathematics, English Language and one Science) which means students are free to choose six options and can follow as traditional or as progressive a curriculum as they wish, depending on their contexts, strengths, skills and interests. The movement from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, and then on to more student-driven learning is picking up pace internationally, but is sadly still the road less travelled at present.

KEVIN CARSON
Head,
Royal Masonic School for Girls

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ABOVE *St Mary's School, Cambridge*

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The Value of a Girls' School

For expat families, choosing the right education for their daughters is a crucial decision. British boarding schools, particularly those with a focus on all-girls education, offer a unique environment where academic excellence is seamlessly combined with personal development, cultural awareness, and preparation for global challenges. St Mary's School, Cambridge, is one such institution. With a long-standing tradition of nurturing young women to thrive in a competitive and interconnected world, the school provides an environment where girls can grow into confident, resilient individuals ready to take their place on the global stage.

Breaking Barriers Through Education

Despite significant progress, gender disparities in leadership, pay, and career opportunities remain a reality worldwide. This makes it more important than ever to equip the next generation of women with the skills and confidence to challenge inequality. St Mary's sees education not just as a pathway to success but as a tool to break down barriers and create lasting change.

Balancing Academic and Personal Growth

Academic achievement is central to the experience at St Mary's. With over 80% of graduates securing places at their first-choice universities, the school's track record speaks for itself. However, the approach goes beyond exams. Students are encouraged to think critically, solve problems creatively, and embrace intellectual curiosity.

Equally important is the focus on personal growth. In an all-girls environment, students are free from societal pressures and stereotypes. This allows them to take risks, express themselves openly, and explore leadership roles, whether in STEM fields, the arts, or social advocacy.

Boarding as a Life Experience

Boarding life is more than just a place to study - it's a space to build lifelong friendships, develop independence, and gain a sense of belonging. With strong pastoral care, a focus on wellbeing, and diverse extracurricular activities, the school offers a holistic experience that supports each girl's journey to adulthood.

Preparing for a Global Future

In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to lead, adapt, and collaborate across cultures is essential. Schools like St Mary's ensure that girls are not only academically prepared but also equipped with the character and confidence to make meaningful contributions wherever their future takes them.

For families seeking a British education that values academic success, personal development, and global perspective, St Mary's School, Cambridge, offers a thoughtful and inspiring choice. Visit ***stmarysschoolcambridge.co.uk*** to find out more.

BELOW *Students are encouraged to think critically*

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ABOVE
Berkhamsted School's new Sixth Form building is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2025

Smart SIXTH

With so many changes in the world, ***Berkhamsted School*** *believes it's vital to transform learning spaces – its new Sixth Form centre is set to do just that*

The world outside schools is changing fast, and Berkhamsted believes that we can't expect students to adapt automatically to the world beyond their classrooms if those classrooms remain unchanged. According to Forbes, 56% of businesses are using AI within their operations, and this is only expected to grow by the time current sixth formers enter the working world. Equally, tech developments mean most current students are expected to have between 10-15 different jobs before they are 40. Beyond the employment landscape, global challenges such as climate change are set to transform the world as we know it.

With such a vast scale of change, the Hertfordshire co-educational day and boarding school has set out to offer its students the necessary tools to face the world of today and tomorrow. The newly developed Sixth Form centre promises to shape students for the future from the moment they step through its doors. With a dedicated entrance separate from Berkhamsted Boys and Girls schools, the Sixth has its own distinct identity to inspire independence and responsibility. A large café space allows students to meet and collaborate in an environment purpose-built to transition them into adult working life.

The classroom design is inspired by the Harkness Model. Developed in America, the model structures classes around a large boardroom-style table, as opposed to the traditional teacher-learner classroom dynamic, in order to encourage discussion and independent thinking. These spaces offer the perfect setting for a forward-thinking Sixth Form syllabus, including a super-curricular AI course which facilitates debates around the ethics of artificial intelligence.

The Sixth Form's innovative design also includes a dedicated Future Zone, constructed to enhance traditional careers advice and with a clear focus on the transforming job market. Many students are likely to take up places at their chosen university (over 80% gained places at their first choice in 2024, and with over 54% achieving A*-A grades), however the Future Zone also houses a working space for budding entrepreneurs to develop their own business models. With an increasing number of people choosing to work for themselves, students will be able to explore this pathway as a viable option straight after school, alongside their chosen HE course or perhaps a little later down the line.

While schools shape students for the future, Berkhamsted believes it is also important to invest in a brighter future for all. As such, the new Sixth Form building has been constructed with sustainability at its heart. It is designed with low carbon, energy and resource efficiency, as well as a meadow quad to promote biodiversity and support student wellbeing. Solar panels and air source heat pumps are used to power the building, setting a blueprint for future developments across the rest of Berkhamsted.

The students of today have the potential to become the changemakers of tomorrow – and Berkhamsted's future-focused new Sixth Form space gives them both the space and the inspiration to do just that.

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HOUSE *proud*

Why Full Boarding benefits international students as well as the wider school community at ***Millfield***

Full boarding is a concept that is becoming increasingly rare in Britain. Many schools offer a plethora of boarding options, flexi, weekly and occasional boarding, meaning schools are quiet, or often empty, on weekends. At a real full boarding school, children live on campus seven days a week and have lots of company in the evenings and on weekends in the boarding houses. The community remains active and vibrant.

This is very important for international students. Many boarding schools have a very small number of overseas students left on campus at the weekends because other students only board Monday to Friday and return home on the weekends.

Millfield has 950 full boarders. This is three-quarters of all the students in the school (1300). Even if 100 students leave school for various family occasions or other commitments over a weekend, 850 students remain on campus. This is important for social interactions, activities and enjoyment of school life.

Millfield Prep has 125 full boarders, and 20 occasional boarders. This is one third of all the pupils in the school. This is a really good size group of children who live at school all week.

A busy boarding house also helps children cope with any homesickness. The consistent nature of full boarding means that children can familiarise themselves with the school routine and get to know their peers and staff really well. Houses are alive in the evenings and on weekends, and a busy programme of activities and events keeps students busy and occupied.

ABOVE *Sport at Millfield* **BELOW** *Pupils at Millfield*

Many schools have frequent fixed exeats throughout the year which can be a headache for parents of international students who often have to go to their UK based guardian or relative. This break in the term hampers progress and often causes students to lose momentum throughout the term. Millfield only has one fixed exeat per year, at the end of September in the Autumn term, so everyone gets a break after a busy start to the academic year. Optional exeats are possible to be agreed with Houseparents should parents be in the UK.

Full boarding schools will arrange travel for children to get to and from airports and train stations at the start and end of terms. Group travel arrangements are made for large numbers of students travelling to the same destination. At Millfield, staff representatives are at London Heathrow and on the main train line from Somerset to London at the start of term to welcome students back to the UK and help them on their onward travel. At Millfield, over 20% of boarders are international from over 70 different countries. No one nationality dominates, but Hong Kong and the Middle East are regions where many of our students reside. We also have another 20% who are British students living overseas. This creates a wide cultural diversity and is something that has been a feature of Millfield since its foundation in 1935. Houses are a fusion of backgrounds, cultures and beliefs, and everyone learns from and embraces this mix. At the start of the academic year, we hold an induction day specifically for international families which allows students to spend more time with their new Houseparent and to start to make friendships. This community feel, and meeting people from all over the world, is often cited as a student's favourite aspect of being at Millfield and is one of the distinctive features of the school.

JAMES POSTLE

Deputy Head
Millfield

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Standing at the Threshold

John Davies, Head Master of ***Dauntsey's****, reflects on how schools must embrace AI as a partner in redefining education for the future.*

Over the past 20 years, education has repeatedly been promised 'revolutions' driven by new technologies. Some of these innovations create what we might call 'threshold moments'—times when a technological leap compels us to pause and reconsider whether the purpose of education, its content, and its methods have been fundamentally altered.

I recall being an eager early adopter of iPads in classrooms, attending trainings that heralded these devices as transformative. Yet, personal device technologies, while immensely helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic, fell short of the profound impact many had predicted. When classrooms returned to 'normal' post-pandemic, there was a collective sigh of relief. For many, the robustness of traditional education felt like a reassuring anchor in an unpredictable world—a reminder that perhaps the world hadn't changed as much as it seemed.

What does this new technology mean for education? For knowledge? For humanity?

Now, however, the meteoric rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically Large Language Models (LLMs), presents us with a truly novel threshold moment. Unlike incremental advancements like smartphones and tablets, AI represents a paradigm shift. Technology companies like OpenAI have introduced tools that don't merely operate faster or more efficiently but think in entirely new ways. As Ethan Mollick aptly puts it, we are engaging with an 'alien' intelligence—one that promises to fundamentally reshape how we study, learn, and work. It might even change the way we think.

ABOVE
In the classroom at Dauntsey's

Schools like mine now stand at this threshold, confronting urgent questions: What does this new technology mean for education? For knowledge? For humanity? These are not abstract musings; they demand immediate attention. As AI platforms grow increasingly capable, it becomes critical to identify and cultivate those uniquely human qualities that machines cannot replicate—while also learning to collaborate with these 'alien' partners. Given that the latest LLMs outperform humans on most PhD-level academic benchmarks, traditional markers of intelligence, such as proficiency in maths, coding, or essay-writing, will no longer suffice as measures of employability. Schools and universities must rethink how they define and assess 'ability' and 'intelligence.'

We owe it to our children to explore this new intelligence with curiosity and responsibility. The progress of AI cannot be stopped, and, as Mollick observes, even if current models represent the pinnacle of this technology, they are already world-changing. The challenge before us is to embrace the possibility that AI can enhance our children's lives—making them wiser, better informed, less stressed, more empathetic, and more impactful. The alternative does not bear contemplating.

Whether this threshold moment leads to better lives for humanity remains to be seen. But I am confident schools will play a central role in shaping the answer. At Dauntsey's, we engage daily with the opportunities and challenges these technologies present. Like many schools, we stand at the threshold with open eyes, ready to navigate the unknown rather than wishing it away. We don't have all the answers, but therein lies both the beauty and the challenge—this is uncharted territory for everyone.

Ours is the future we choose to create. With a little help, of course, from our new alien friends.

JOHN DAVIES
Head Master
Dauntsey's School

Right A levels?

A surprising number of students choose their A levels unaware of the long-term impact on future study and career if they get it wrong, says Quintessentially Education's ***Jess Harris***

Lily is doing the wrong A levels. A Year 13 student at a leading London girls' school, she has realised that the subjects she has chosen aren't right for what she wants to study at university. When she took her GCSEs, she was keen on humanities and textiles and opted for History, Psychology and Fine Art for A level. But she now realises she wants to study something to do with Life Sciences and she can't do that without Biology A level.

She is not alone. Which, the UK consumer choices group, reported that 28% of more than 1,000 university applicants aged 18–19-years-old said, when surveyed, that they wished they had chosen different subjects. And only half of students surveyed felt well enough informed about how the subjects they had studied could affect their choice of degree and university. At Quintessentially Education, we are often asked to support young people who have chosen A levels without realising the full implications for their future studies.

"It would be really helpful if our education system started with the desired university degree and worked backwards," says Amelia Buckworth, Education Manager at Quintessentially Education. "If we started with where students want to end up, we could ensure they have clear academic pathways. Instead, students narrow their subjects in Year 9 when they choose their GCSEs and again at A level."

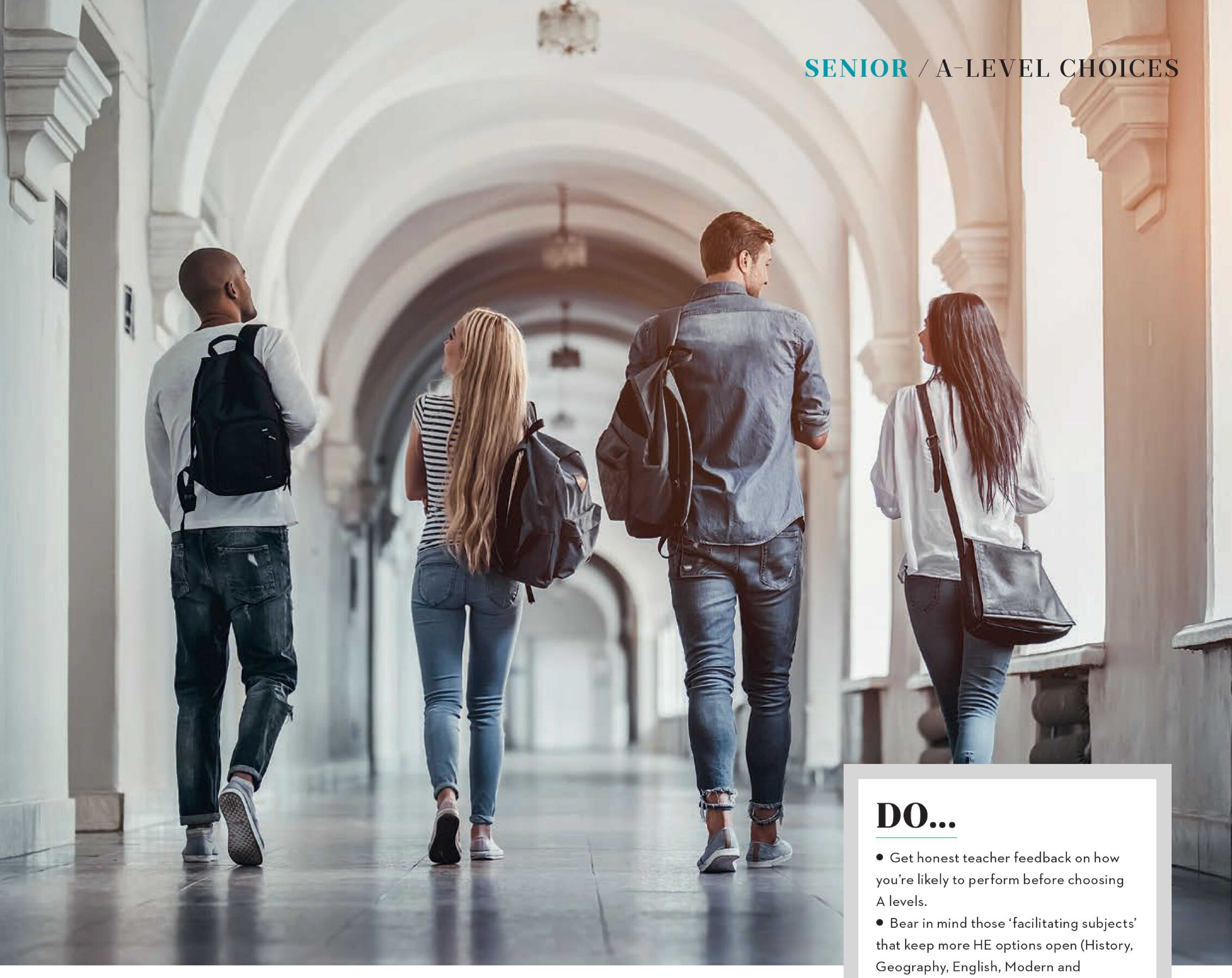
Of course, some students know early what they want to study at university, but many others are unsure. Even for students who have a clear idea of where they are heading, Buckworth advises doing the research. "Different universities and courses have distinct subject requirements. Being aware of these differences early on will help ensure that students' chosen GCSE and A-level subjects do not become a barrier to pursuing a certain academic interest, or a particular university." For example, a BSc in Economics at LSE requires an A* in Maths, but a BA in Economics at SOAS does not.

> **"28% of university applicants aged 18–19 said they wished they had chosen different A-level subjects"**

By far the largest number of A-level students we support are those who dropped maths after GCSE without realising they needed an A level in the subject to go on to apply to their desired STEM course at university. Buckworth says: "What may take you by surprise are the courses that you won't study at school, such as Aerospace Engineering".

For those who are unsure when they embark on choosing GCSEs and A levels, Buckworth suggests keeping options open. It helps to research a selection of subjects to gauge the entry requirements. It might also be wise to choose one or two 'facilitating subjects' – academic A levels that top universities prefer (see *Do...* panel, right).

For those students who have started A levels and realised they aren't the right



“Universities and courses have distinct subject requirements – a BSc in Economics at LSE requires an A* in Maths, but a BA at SOAS does not”

subjects, it’s important not to panic. If you’re only a term in, think about switching just after the winter break. This is school dependent, but we have supported students who have changed an A-level subject after one term. Alternatively, if you have your heart set on a particular course at a particular university, you could explore taking on another A level. “We only advise students to take four A levels in particular circumstances,” says Buckworth. “But if picking up a fourth helps you get on to the course you want to do, then it makes sense.”

It can also be a good idea to broaden your university horizons – there are so many courses to choose from, all with different entry requirements. Another option is foundation courses, which take up to one-year to complete, typically have lower entrance thresholds and may help get you to your destination point. These can be studied at a university or sometimes at another location (for instance, a further education college) and are designed to help access university. Buckworth doesn’t recommend banking on this route, but adds that successful completion enables many students to access their chosen course.

Most important of all is to do your research. “It doesn’t matter if you don’t know what you want to do at university, but make sure you get good advice,” says Buckworth. “Ask your school for advice on how to keep every pathway open, and there is always secondary expert support available, too.”

Jess Harris is the Director of Quintessentially Education

DO...

- Get honest teacher feedback on how you’re likely to perform before choosing A levels.
- Bear in mind those ‘facilitating subjects’ that keep more HE options open (History, Geography, English, Modern and Classical Languages, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths and Further Maths).
- Be wary of A levels with overlapping curricula – for instance Business Studies and Economics – if you are taking three A-level subjects.
- Consider Art or Music as a fourth subject, rather than one of your three subjects, if you are unsure of your course direction.

DON’T...

- Assume you will like a subject at A level just because you liked it at GCSE – research the syllabus.
- Narrow your options by choosing subjects considered ‘soft’ by some universities. Examples may include General Studies and Global Perspectives.
- Take all new subjects – three, or even two, entirely new areas of study might become overwhelming.
- Study a Modern Foreign Language (for instance, French, Mandarin or Spanish) as one of your three core A levels if you are already a native speaker – it may be viewed as a ‘light’ option by universities.

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DIGITAL *balance*

*Helen Simpson of **St George's Ascot** on how it's embracing the digital age to give pupils tools for learning and for life*

'So, how do we handle tech use at school these days?' That's a question I get asked a lot. The truth is, it all comes down to balance. Here at St George's School, Ascot, we're committed to developing confident, capable, and connected young women who can navigate the digital world thoughtfully and knowledgeably – so we need to get this right.

This year we've made some bold changes. One of the biggest has been introducing Yondr mobile device pouches, aligning with recent government policy on mobile phone use in schools. Since September 2024, we've been completely phone-free from Years 7 to 11, with pupils' phones securely locked away during the school day. Our older girls, in Years 9 to 11, take charge of their own devices, keeping them locked in the pouches until the final bell. This more structured approach ensures that mobile phones stay out of sight and out of mind, allowing pupils to focus on their learning and personal development without digital distractions.

We know excessive screen time can affect focus, sleep and mental health, and we wanted to tackle that head-on. We also know that we're not alone in our views. A recent University of Cambridge study reveals nearly half of British teens feel they are 'hooked' on social media. Our experience following this chosen approach is that the girls have embraced the change with maturity. They are more engaged, friendships have greater space to flourish, and the school day feels simpler.

ABOVE & BELOW *Pupils at St George's*

We certainly do not think that digital wellness is all about locking away phones and turning back the clock. At St George's our approach is future-focused. We are preparing our girls to navigate and thrive in a tech-driven world. Embracing technology thoughtfully is key to this vision. As our Learning Innovation Lead Elodie Pierre puts it: "When used intentionally, we see that AI can elevate education by enhancing the human connection and critical thinking that our teachers bring to the classroom every day".

This belief underpins our Academic Management Innovation Exploration Plan (yes, even the name sounds like it came from AI). In fact, it's a roadmap for equipping our teaching staff with effective measures to integrate AI effectively into the curriculum. We already ensure that digital skills are taught alongside digital wellness within our PSHE programme, so our girls don't just use technology but develop a lifelong, balanced relationship with it. We're not just reacting to the digital age – our vision is to shape how it fits into education and life.

This approach recognises that while technology offers remarkable educational opportunities, it must be managed with care and intention. Teenagers today face unprecedented pressures from social media and constant connectivity. Our role as educators extends to guiding them in developing healthy relationships with technology, whether through innovative solutions like Yondr pouches or by fostering open discussions about AI and digital literacy.

At St George's, we remain committed to setting a national example for digital wellness in education. Our approach, which is grounded in research, empathy, and innovation, ensures our students not only excel academically but also develop the resilience and digital wisdom essential for life beyond the classroom.

We take immense pride in leading the charge toward healthier digital habits, emphasising the importance of conscientious and balanced technology use among pupils and staff alike. Our mission goes beyond academic excellence, empowering our girls to thrive in, and understand, an increasingly digital landscape.

HELEN SIMPSON
Deputy Head (Pastoral)
St George's Ascot

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VALUE **ADDED**

James Barton, Global Director of ***MPW****, considers what 'value added' signifies in a world where tax has been imposed on independent schools*

There's a peculiar charm to British bureaucracy. It can take something as mundane as Value Added Tax (VAT) and turn it into a philosophical debate about fairness, privilege and the purpose of education. Independent schools now find themselves in the VAT crosshairs, as the government's decision to remove their tax-exempt status has sent ripples through the sector. To some, this is justice – a long-overdue levelling of a tilted playing field. But amidst the applause and outrage, one question lingers: does redistributing resources solve the real issues we face in education?

How do all schools, state and independent alike, use their resources to add real value to students' lives? And for that, let's return to the name of this much-debated tax itself. Set aside the 'T' (a challenge for HMRC), and we're left with the heart of the matter: 'value added' and what this means in education. It's not about budgets or rankings but about how schools transform the lives of their students.

For centuries, education wasn't a numbers game. Medieval grammar schools didn't chase rankings or collate spreadsheets. They were places of formation, not calibration – focused on instilling discipline and knowledge, even if their methods occasionally leaned into questionable territory (apologies to left-handed students coerced into writing with their right).

> **"Value added is not about rankings, but about how schools transform the lives of their students"**

ABOVE
Pupils at MPW

Somewhere along the way, we traded formation for calculation. League tables, introduced with great fanfare, promised clarity, but schools were reduced to data points. The problem isn't the data itself, but how it is often used. Schools can top the rankings through cherry-picked metrics – test scores here, attendance there – but numbers obscure the quieter victories that define education.

Even the Greeks, trailblazers of Western education, would struggle to comprehend our obsession with league tables. While they valued feats like memorising the Iliad, they also understood the importance of nurturing the soul. Plato didn't rank his students, nor did Aristotle hand out gold stars. Their goal was wisdom, not quantifiable achievement.

The duty to add value applies universally. Independent schools must prove that their resources are tools for transformation. State schools, now described as 'beneficiaries' of this tax reform, must ensure that any extra funding translates into meaningful outcomes.

And what about the students themselves? Schools across both state and independent sectors must ask if they are equipping young people to thrive in an ever-changing world. They must also ask if they are nurturing thinkers, creators, and collaborators – qualities that society desperately needs and that no league table can measure. In the end, education is not about privilege or policy, it's about potential – lives changed for the better.

JAMES BARTON

Global Director
MPW Group

Ask the EXPERTS

Our experts answer questions on e-learning tools versus tutoring and helping a child build up resilience and self-esteem

Nathaniel McCullagh

Managing Director, Simply Learning Tuition

Q ***My friend has hired a full-time tutor for her two children who go to my son's school. The tutor is prepping one child for a Yale application while he teaches IGCSEs to the other. I want my son to have the best education possible – should I consider hiring a tutor for him, too?***

A Tutors have never been in higher demand it would seem: 46% of London children receive tuition outside of their normal school hours, according to The Sutton Trust (2023). Given the high prevalence of tutoring, many parents may feel they need to find a tutor just to make sure their child isn't missing out. However, my strong advice is, don't panic. Talk to your son's teacher or headteacher to get an accurate picture of his academic progress and whether he is on track to get the results he, you and the school believe he can achieve.

As all parents know, every child is different and will have different learning styles. If your child is doing well at school academically, performing above expectations in school exams and well-motivated to reinforce his school learning at home with homework and revision then I doubt you will need the help of a tutor.

At Simply Learning Tuition we would not accept jobs where tuition is not required; we would not want to waste your or your son's time. Artificially pushing a child beyond their capabilities is not in anyone's interests and may even lower their general confidence and raise anxiety levels.

There are circumstances, however, when a tutor is invaluable. I completely support your friend's decision to get specialist advice for a Yale application. Simply Learning Tuition has successfully guided many students and families through every stage of the competitive US admissions process; not all senior schools will have extensive experience of this and so getting specialist support is a good idea.

If you feel, or your school's advice is, that your son has obvious gaps in his academics, it is well

> “Many parents may feel they need to find a tutor just to make sure their child isn’t missing out”

worth looking for additional help from a tutor. Danger signs to look out for include a bad school report, a call from the teacher or worse, a child who is trying to miss school, is stressed and seems worried. If any of this is ringing alarm bells, my strong advice is to contact a tuition company, with an established track record.

A good tuition company will have met and vetted all their tutors, ensured they have a strong academic record, extensive teaching and tutoring experience and set up stringent safeguarding checks. They should suggest two or three tutors for you to choose from and will act as an advocate for you, ensuring you find the right tutor to suit your child. Importantly, they can step in to quickly resolve any niggles or difficulties should they occur. You will need to decide if you want face-to-face or online tutoring. In-person tutoring can be preferable for younger children and SEN students. We find that demand for in-person tutoring is particularly high at the moment, so don’t leave it to the last moment to find a suitable tutor once you decide to go down that route.

Finally, remember that you are entering a fixed-term process with a distinct end goal: a child who can succeed independently in their study and is best placed to fulfil their academic potential.

simplylearningtuition.co.uk

Sidcot
Live Adventurously

Sidcot School is a co-educational British Independent Day & Boarding School for ages 11 - 18. We provide a supportive environment to help your child thrive both personally and academically. Find out more about studying at Sidcot at **www.sidcot.org.uk.**

FINALIST 2024
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF THE YEAR
AWARDS

98%

of students went on to their preferred choice of institution in the past academic year, with 43% choosing Russell Group, leading research and creative universities.

ABOVE *Pupils at Malvern St James*

HOME *Away from* HOME

Malvern St James' *supportive boarding community lies within easy reach of London*

Malvern St James Girls' School (MSJ) is a leading independent day and boarding school for girls aged 3-18, situated in the heart of the stunning Malvern Hills in Worcestershire. Renowned for its academic excellence, supportive community, and commitment to empowering girls, MSJ offers a unique environment where students thrive both inside and outside the classroom. With a rich history and a forward-thinking approach, MSJ prepares girls for success in a rapidly changing world.

Boarding at Malvern St James offers a transformative experience for girls aged 7 and above, combining a nurturing environment with exceptional opportunities for personal and academic growth. The school's location is a key advantage for families in London and beyond. The direct train service from London Paddington to Great Malvern makes the school easily reachable while providing a sense of separation that allows girls to grow and develop in a serene and focused environment. The school is conveniently located just across the road from the station, ensuring a smooth transition between home and school life.

At MSJ, boarding is more than a practical solution; it's a chance for girls to thrive in a supportive and inspiring community. Our boarding houses are designed to feel like home, fostering a warm and inclusive atmosphere. From the moment they arrive, boarders are welcomed into a vibrant family environment where friendships flourish and lifelong memories are made.

"Boarding at MSJ isn't just about living at school; it's about belonging to a community that nurtures each girl's potential and celebrates her individuality," says Director of Boarding, Miss van Ravenstein.

Boarding at MSJ extends far beyond academics. Our boarders benefit from an extensive co-curricular programme that includes sports, music, drama, creative clubs and outdoor pursuits, ensuring a well-rounded education. Weekend activities are designed to be both fun and enriching, ranging from cultural trips and adventure outings to school events and workshops.

At the heart of the MSJ boarding experience is exceptional pastoral care. Our experienced and dedicated staff work closely with families to ensure every girl's needs are met. Regular communication, coupled with a genuine commitment to each child's wellbeing, helps parents feel reassured that their daughters are in safe and caring hands.

Living and learning together creates a strong sense of camaraderie among the girls, instilling values of teamwork, empathy, and mutual respect. To discover more about boarding at Malvern St James, or to arrange a visit, contact our Admissions team today Ⓔ

Next Open Morning on Friday 7 March;
Please email msjadmissions@malvernstjames.co.uk or via telephone 01684 892288.
Fees: Day: £10,107 - £26,088; Boarding: £32,364 - £53,424 pa (based on full boarding)

ABOVE
Careers and HE fair at Whitgift School

> **“There is a strong interest in traditional UK institutions, but also an increasing awareness of less traditional routes – including apprenticeships”**

Careers COUNSEL

With so much change going on in the higher education and jobs landscape, how do we guide young people to make the right choices for them? We get insights from careers specialists at three leading independents

We hear: 'educating for careers that haven't been invented yet' a lot and – like all great clichés – it's making an important point. What world are young people full of ambition, skills and talent heading into? We can be pretty certain that side ventures and career changes are increasingly likely – the job for life is so 20th century. Then we have a degree of uncertainty in the higher-education landscape (with more to come). Also, young people's perceptions of the value of committing to a chunk of debt before they even join the world of work come into play. These and other tough questions are facing careers advisors tasked with giving guidance. Here's what they say.

WHITGIFT SCHOOL

At Whitgift we've moved away from the whole notion of 'career advice' – which conjures associations for me of the 'expert' telling a young person how to map out their life, with little regard for the seismic changes in the world of work that are now underway, and little respect for the young person's autonomy," says Kate Goldberg, Assistant Head (Student Futures).

She says a whole different mindset is required. "We're committed to a coaching ethos, which centralises an ongoing discussion about the young person's values, strengths and interests and gives the students the tools to match these to potential careers and higher education options." In Whitgift's approach, there's also recognition that young people may well change course as their interests and strengths evolve. The aim, says Kate Goldberg, is to give them the tools to carry on with the coaching on what they want long after they've left school. There's plenty of in-school inspiration though. "We have an extensive programme of employer encounters – which starts from Year 6 – and ensures our students are exposed to a wide range of professionals from different sectors and industries."

Kate Goldberg believes we may be behind the times in understanding young people's viewpoint and knowledge of what a good job is. "The stereotype is still that they want a job as a doctor, lawyer or investment banker – and they feel they need to study Biology, Latin or Maths to open certain doors. But we've now embedded our Student Futures programme into our PSHE curriculum," she says. "Throughout their time at school students develop their understanding of growing and shrinking industries, the changing workforce and how key skills are used." Useful intel, as is Whitgift's inclusion of topics such as entrepreneurship, global citizenship, digital literacy and critical thinking within the Junior Year Curriculum (ages 10-12), and with a focus on their importance to future employability.

Students are also up to speed on shifts in higher education so, while most students still focus on Russell Group universities, there's increased interest in international universities and degree apprenticeships. "It's interesting that we see some of our brightest and most aspirational students choosing degree apprenticeships now. They suit students who are self-starters and already focused on a particular professional pathway," says Kate Goldberg.

Whitgift is doing more in the space around evolving options – notably degree apprenticeships – as it watches the landscape of funding for UK universities. Kate Goldberg notes that students are certainly attracted to the idea of zero student debt, a salary as they develop their professional skills – and also notching up three years' career experience when peers are still on the jobs starting block.

With so much to consider, it's certainly an increasingly tough decision-making process. "I tell students not to worry at all of they don't know what to do by the time they leave school," says Kate Goldberg. "Studying a subject you love is always going to be better than forcing yourself to do something you have zero interest in, just because you think it leads to a better career." Ultimately, the jobs may change but some things will always stay the same. "Most workplaces want passion, people-skills and raw talent; they'll teach you the specifics on the job."

OAKHAM SCHOOL

Careers advice starts early at Oakham School, paced to be appropriate to age and stage. "We include information on careers in the pastoral curriculum for all year groups, including those in the youngest year. Events and one-to-one guidance then increase as students make GCSE choices and move through study at GCSE and post-16 level," says Dr Rachael Pearson, Head of Careers and Progression.

Getting the right blend is important, so Oakham offers a mixture of talks, workshops and individual support. Students are pretty well informed at a general level but may want a bit more support on the specifics. "Our students are engaged and aware of the world – they have heard of potential pathways in many cases but may not have access to information on the details or planned changes to application systems, for example," says Rachael Pearson.

The careers team suggest bespoke areas for students to investigate, also offering access to platforms, such as Morrisby and Unifrog, that help students consider their aptitudes and interests and check out choices in higher education and careers. Oakham students are increasingly open to the variety of options. "There is a strong interest in traditional UK institutions but also an increasing awareness of overseas options and less traditional routes – including apprenticeships and also interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary degrees."

Oakham gets critical advice started early – GCSE students get advice sessions on producing a CV, and are also offered follow-up meetings. "We stress the significance of transferable skills and competencies, especially in relation to co-curricular activities, so students become accustomed to understanding these through the lens of recruitment. The school is active in organising and supporting placements, also helping with that key non-school reference for onward destinations.

Interest in apprenticeships is growing all the time and there's a dedicated Work Experience and Apprenticeships Officer at Oakham. "Demand can outstrip supply though – it is a competitive route." Inevitably, money is part of the choice equation, and Rachael Pearson finds that students thinking about university are influenced by factors such as outlay versus time to recoup. "They also express concern about the cost of living being higher in some cities, especially in London."

Oakham offers a full suite of study options – A level, BTEC and IB – so part of the advice process is to encourage students to think about how they want to learn, as well as what they want to learn. But Rachael Pearson says the team are also on hand to advise on ensuring subject combinations to keep options open. "We do point out that some career and higher education pathways have prerequisites – and we also encourage students to explore how subjects become broader at higher levels, so can lead to routes they may not have considered."

THE LEYS SCHOOL

At The Leys in Cambridge, careers education starts early. "Starting in Year 7, we deliver a focused and impartial careers curriculum," says Head of Sixth Form and Careers Robin Griffiths. This gears up as children grow, with some sessions delivered across year groups, others to interested groups. Often the advice is one-to-one, and a critical aim is to build emotional intelligence so students think broadly and make informed choices.

While some pupils are very well informed, others can be uncertain about where their future lies, so narrowing down happens organically, not just in careers sessions. "Curriculum learning is linked to careers, and we encourage pupils to investigate a broad range of opportunities and career options to help them make informed choices appropriate to their personalities, interests and aptitudes."

The Leys gives access to Unifrog, so young people can do their own research, and also provides expertise with the mechanics of UCAS, Oxbridge and international university applications. There are lots of events throughout the year, from industry-

ABOVE
Careers insights are delivered in multiple ways at The Leys School

Our camp
Oakham School

ABOVE *Investigating onward destination options at Oakham School in Rutland*

specific workshops to careers forums. A Cambridge location means a great range of visiting speakers. "Recent guest speakers have included an RAF fighter pilot, a coffee entrepreneur, the General Counsel for Adidas, a leading author and film director, a computer gaming artist, a Fellow of The Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Head of Microsoft's Talent Sourcing Team," says Robin Griffiths.

The Old Leysian network also proves to be able and willing, with speakers, careers advice and work experience all being offered in support of current pupils – and, says Robin Griffiths, these can be the most inspiring insights and connections. Higher education talks are a big feature of careers support during Year 11 and Sixth Form, and the Careers Office has drop-in guidance sessions. There's also advice on CV building and writing, as well as support with work shadowing and work placements.

Russell Group universities are still very popular, but the school, like the city of Cambridge, is cosmopolitan, so there's also plenty of interest in international destinations. "We had university applications to the USA, Canada, Europe and Asia last year," says Robin Griffiths. "Those pupils are looking for different types of educational opportunities, particularly with those applying to the US where the emphasis is on breadth of curriculum."

While the degree versus apprenticeship debate is not new, says Robin Griffiths, interest has certainly grown. "They are now recognised as a high-status alternative to university. Those degree apprenticeships that combine employment with a well-respected firm and a high-quality degree course are seen as a very attractive option, although they are highly competitive as a result."

He believes financial considerations are influencing students' decisions on onward destinations – as is the current state of the university sector. "Fear of debt and concerns over the rising costs will deter some young people," says Robin Griffiths. "For others, it will influence choices over what and where to study, with living expenses often a deciding factor in more young people choosing to stay living at home while studying nearby. The value for money of investing in a degree is also under scrutiny."

Robin Griffiths believes that the old rule of doing what you love is still a good one, with the usual proviso of choosing wisely if you have a specific course or university in mind. "Passion and natural aptitude can certainly help towards getting better grades." he says. "It is also perfectly normal not to know what you want to do for a career, or what you want to study at university – and many graduates go on to work in fields completely unrelated to their chosen degree."

> **"Students develop their understanding of growing and shrinking industries, the changing workforce and how key skills are used"**

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SCAN ME

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royalrussell.co.uk

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SCAN ME

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UK Boarding School Exhibition

ANDERSON EDUCATION

andersoneducation.co.uk

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Grosvenor House Hotel - 8 February - 11.00 to 16.00

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Contact: **Sara Sparling**
Director & Education Consultant
enquiries@andersoneducation.co.uk

CLIFTON COLLEGE

BRENTWOOD SCHOOL

BROMSGROVE SCHOOL

KING WILLIAM'S COLLEGE

Ashford School

ashfordschool.co.uk

-

Location: Kent
Head: Michael Hall
School Type: Co-Ed, Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3-18 years
Ashford School has a strong academic tradition, which is combined with a modern, dynamic approach to the development of the learning habits required for success in the 21st century. The learning habits we focus on are Independence, Resilience, Scholarship and curiosity, Tolerance and collaboration, and Creativity.

Brentwood School

brentwoodschool.co.uk

-

Location: Essex
Head: Michael Bond
School Type: Co-Ed Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3-18 years
Brentwood School is the only UK Top 10 IB school with boarding that is co-educational. We have two other Sixth Form pathways to choose from: A-Levels and BTEC. We are within 30 minutes of Central London which also connects Brentwood to Heathrow Airport. In 2025, we open our new state-of-the-art boarding house, expanding our boarding with all rooms being single with en-suite shower rooms.

Bromsgrove School

bromsgrove-school.co.uk

-

Location: Worcestershire
Head: Michael Punt
School Type: Co-Ed, Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 2 - 18 years
Bromsgrove offers an all-round education, combining academic excellence with a richness of opportunity. Pupils engage enthusiastically with knowledge, embrace new ideas and are intellectually stimulated. Bromsgrove School's results are impressive, but this is much more than a place to get good grades: it prides itself on being a happy school where children of all ages can thrive.

Cheltenham Ladies' College

cheltladiescollege.org

-

Location: Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
Head: Ms Eve Jardine-Young
School Type: Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 11-18
Cheltenham Ladies' College's global reputation was founded on our pioneering approach to girls' education 170 years ago and our future aims are no less ambitious. By nurturing well-rounded, self-confident girls, we help them to develop the skills they need to navigate the choices ahead, leaving College as empowered young women.

Culford School

culford.co.uk

-

Location: Suffolk
Head: Claire Bentley
School Type: Co-Ed Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 1-18
Culford is a boarding school with

KING'S COLLEGE, TAUNTON

KING'S BRUTON

420 pupils in Senior School and 300 in Prep School. The individual attention of a small community combines with the wider educational opportunities of a larger school. Performance sports academies in tennis, golf, football and Culford's Dance School integrate sport with academic study.

Clifton College

cliftoncollege.com

-

Location: Bristol
Head: Dr Tim Greene
School Type: Co-Ed Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3-18 years

We enjoy an enviable position in the safe suburb of Clifton, offering an outstanding co-educational Boarding and Day environment for 3-18 students. Excellent academic opportunities are reinforced by outstanding pastoral care. The extensive co-curricular programme is characterised by award winning sport and music.

Dean Close School

deanclose.org.uk

-

Location: Gloucestershire
Head: Bradley Salisbury
School Type: Co-Ed, Prep,Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 7- 18 years

Dean Close School, founded in 1886, is celebrated for its outstanding academic achievements where 90% of pupils go on to their first-choice university. With rich co-curricular offerings, spanning sports to performing arts, and a strong focus on pastoral care, Dean Close ensures that pupils thrive both academically and personally. The school delivers a balanced and enriching educational experience, helping pupils grow into well-rounded individuals prepared for future success. For international pupils, Dean Close provides a welcoming environment, ensuring a smooth transition through personalised care, dedicated EAL (English as an Additional Language) support, and integration into the wider school community. In 2023, the school was awarded the Talk Education accolade for Best International Experience, underscoring its commitment to offering an unparalleled experience.

Glenalmond College

glenalmondcollege.co.uk

-

Location: Perthshire
Head: Mark Mortimer
School Type: Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 12-18 years

Set in a stunning 300-acre campus in the Scottish Highlands, Glenalmond College combines academic excellence, rich co-curricular opportunities and the great outdoors. Our true boarding school experience, strong sense of community and activity offering inspire resilience and leadership, preparing pupils for success in the next stage of their lives.

Gordonstoun

gordonstoun.org.uk

-

Location: Elgin
Head: Simon Cane-Hardy
School Type: Prep, Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 4.5 - 18 years

The school's stunning location on the sunny Moray Coast in North Scotland provides the background for Gordonstoun's outstanding outdoor

GORDONSTOUN

HAZLEGROVE

LLANDOVERY

education programme. Through expeditions and sail training voyages Gordonstoun students gain invaluable experience in being both leaders and team players and in having compassion and understanding for others and of themselves. Service to the local community also comprises a core part of Gordonstoun's 'working week'. This includes the Fire Service, where older students respond to genuine emergencies. The school also welcomes students from all over the world, creating a diverse and dynamic global community in which to live and learn.

Hazlegrove Prep School

hazlegrove.co.uk

-

Location: Somerset
Head: Ed Benbow
School Type: Co-Ed Prep
Age range: 2 - 13 years

We pride ourselves in our all-round excellence, and our pupils achieve awards in a variety of different disciplines from a range of the top senior schools in the country. We have outstanding pastoral care, applying a proactive approach, in which every member of staff, whatever their role, is involved.

Headington Rye Oxford

headington.org

-

Location: Oxford
Head: Caroline Jordan
School Type: Girls Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3-18 years

Headington Rye Oxford is set in large safe, enclosed campus in the heart of Oxford city. Rated amongst the best performing girls' schools at A Level and GCSE, girls go on to Oxbridge and Russell Group universities, and there are specialist programmes on offer for Medicine and Veterinary Science, Architecture and Law.

King's College, Taunton

kings-taunton.co.uk

-

Location: Somerset
Head: Michael Sloan
School Type: Prep, Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 2-18 years

King's College Taunton is renowned for providing an outstanding education for 2 to 18 year olds. Surrounded by idyllic Somerset countryside, the school offers a nurturing environment with personalised support enabling each child to thrive. Small class sizes, exceptional learning and pastoral care, and new facilities have all underpinned the school's leading reputation for academic and sporting excellence.

King's School Bruton

kingsbruton.com

-

Location: Somerset
Head: Ian Wilmshurst
School Type: Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 13-18 years

With a rich history spanning 500 years, King's stands as a truly exceptional school. We foster an environment where pupils are encouraged to respect themselves and others and strive for excellence. Our success and popularity stem from our unique combination of excellent pastoral care and commitment to providing high-quality education.

CULFORD

WORTH

QUEENSWOOD SCHOOL

The King's School, Canterbury

kings-school.co.uk

-

Location: Kent
Head: Jude Lowson
School Type: Co-Ed Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3 - 18

The King's School is the oldest in the UK, combining rigorous academic development, market-leading music and sports departments and exception pastoral support. The school is over 1400 years old and sits on the grounds of the Beautiful Canterbury Cathedral, meaning that our students are inspired by wonderful teaching and a sense of history.

King William's College

kwc.im/king-williams-college

-

Location: Isle of Man
Head: Damian Henderson
School Type: Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 11-18

Founded in 1833 and set in a stunning coastal location on the Isle of Man, King William's College is a co-ed independent boarding school for ages 11-18. We are committed to nurturing individual potential and fostering a lifelong love for learning, preparing our students for success beyond college.

Llandovery College

llandoverycollege.com

-

Location: Wales
Head: Dominic Findlay
School Type: Co-Ed Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3 - 18 years

An outstanding school set in a rural location, boasting a passion for sport and musical performance whilst being serious about education. Recently voted a Top 12 World Rugby School with 4 Welsh Regional rugby partners. Small class sizes, where the majority of students secure their first-choice university and inspiring teachers create an incredible educational experience.

Merchiston Castle School

merchiston.co.uk

-

Location: Edinburgh
Head: Mr Jonathan Anderson
School Type: Boys Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 7 - 18 years

Educating young men of integrity since 1833, Merchiston is a remarkable school where boys gain a world-class, outward-looking education. Wellbeing underpins everything we do and our smaller school community makes for meaningful and connected conversations, meaning we get to know your son really well and enabling us to support and motivate him in just the right way.

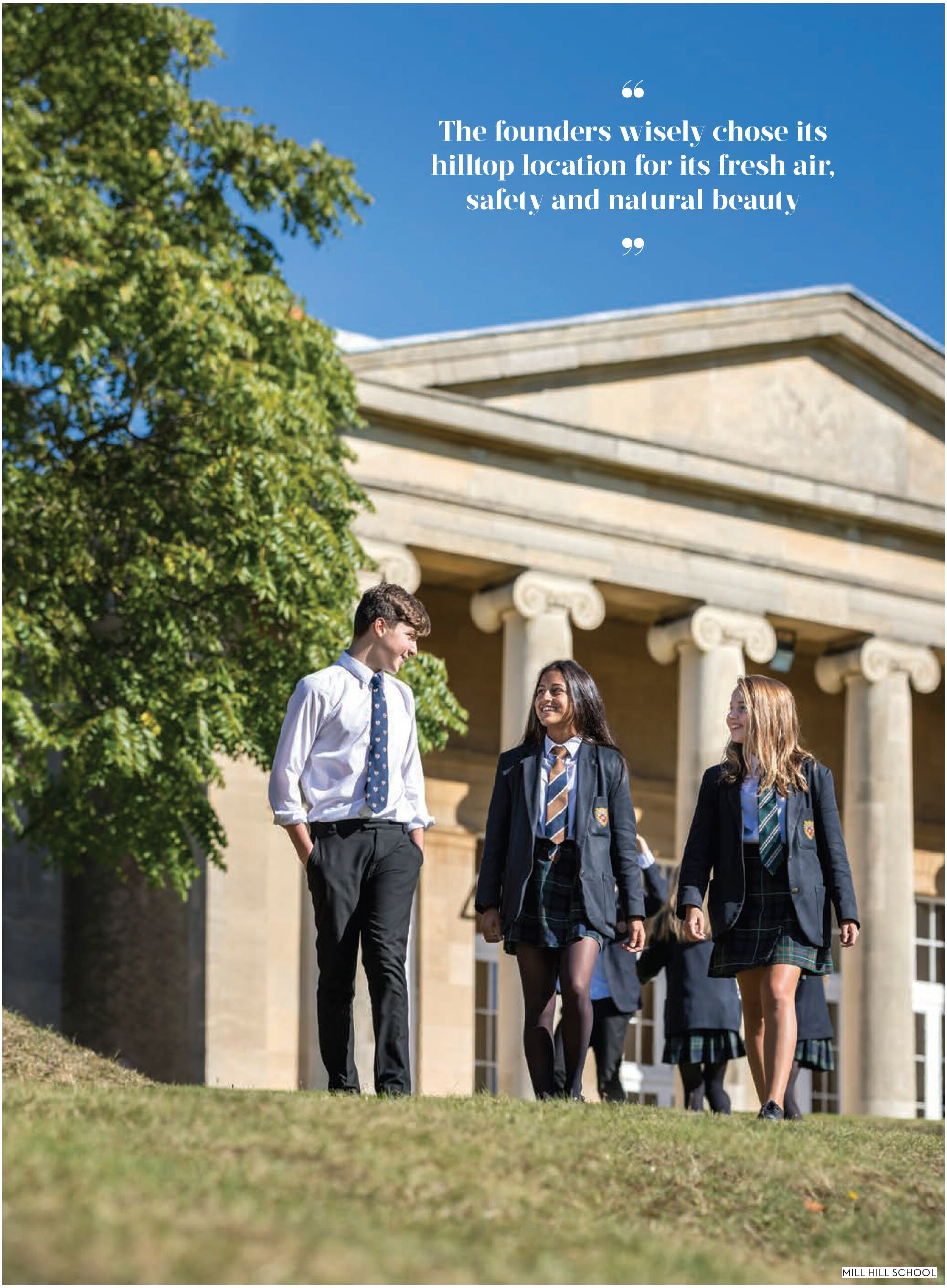
Mill Hill School

millhill.org.uk

-

Location: London
Head: David Benson
School Type: Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 13-18 years

Mill Hill School is London's leading co-educational day and boarding school for boys and girls aged 13 to 18, offering entry into Year 9, entry into Year 10 (two-year GCSE programme and entry into Year 12 (two-Year A level programme), and forms part of the Mill Hill Education Group. Mill Hill School



> "The founders wisely chose its hilltop location for its fresh air, safety and natural beauty"

MILL HILL SCHOOL

KING'S CANTERBURY

DEAN CLOSE

HEADINGTON RYE

was founded in 1807, when its founders wisely chose its location on the top of a hillside for its fresh air, safety and natural beauty.

Oakham School

oakham.rutland.sch.uk

-

Location: Rutland
Head: Mr Henry Price
School Type: Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 11-18 years
Our uniquely balanced pupil community of 50:50 boarding and day pupils and 50:50 girls and boys live and work together in our beautiful 70-acre school campus, which is part of the historic market town of Oakham. Social harmony forms the basis of Oakham School's friendly, down-to-earth atmosphere.

Queenswood School

queenswood.org

-

Location: Hertfordshire
Head: Jo Cameron
School Type: Girls Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 11 - 18 years
Set in 120 acres of beautiful Hertfordshire countryside, but only 20 minutes by train to Central London and close to London's airports, the school community of around 480 pupils is large enough to offer outstanding opportunities, yet small enough to ensure that each girl is known personally to teaching and support staff alike.

Royal Russell School

royalrussell.co.uk

-

Location: Surrey
Head: Chris Hutchinson
School Type: Co-Ed, Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 3-18 years
Royal Russell is different by design. We are a family school which values the things which make each of us distinctively brilliant. Our commitment to each other is to help every member of our community strive for their vision of success – to take a wider view of what their personal ambitions are. Our values speak to who we are and who we strive to be; whether you are a pupil, teacher, staff member, alumni or volunteer.

Sevenoaks School

sevenoaksschool.org

-

Location: Kent
Head: Jesse Elzinga
School Type: Co-Ed Prep, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 11- 18 years
Founded in 1432, Sevenoaks is a co-educational day and boarding school on a 100-acre campus in the Kent countryside. Our reputation is for curriculum innovation. We deliver academic excellence with a strong pastoral and co-curricular emphasis, and an inclusive global dimension inspired by the IB.

Worth School

worthschool.org.uk

-

Location: West Sussex
Head: Stuart McPherson
School Type: Co-Ed, Senior, Sixth Form
Age range: 11-18 years
Worth School is one of the UK's leading independent Catholic schools. We offer GCSE, A Level and the IB. Our students enter the world as young people who are kind, reflective and self-assured in a peaceful, grounded sense.

Where Global Citizens Begin Their Journey

London's one of a kind multilingual nursery gives children a head start in mastering languages from early childhood.

PHILEAS FOX
NURSERY SCHOOL
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60 seconds with

Joanna Wright

The Head of ***King Edward's, Witley*** *on her background and educational philosophy*

What is your background?

Ⓐ I love learning and as a pupil I enjoyed the whole school experience. As my adoptive family were teachers or vicars, I always thought that I would never teach. However, I have now worked in schools for nearly 30 years, and I am married to a School Chaplain, so thankfully I was proved wrong. In my career, I have been privileged to work in amazing schools teaching drama, French, PSHE, English and RS. My understanding of holistic education really developed as a Housemistress at St Edward's, Oxford before taking up the role of Deputy Principal, Pastoral, at Queenswood. This, in turn, led to me moving north to become Deputy Head at St Peter's, York. I am now beginning my sixth year of headship here at King Edward's, Witley.

ABOVE *Joanna Wright with King Edward's, Witley pupils*

What excites you most about your role?

Ⓐ Everything – the art of being with people, the art of the possible. My role is multi-faceted, ever shifting. It demands mental agility, stamina, and creativity. Everyone has their own expectation of their Head, so I am always learning. Each day is different – sometimes familiar, but never dull or predictable. As Head of a Senior School, there is always the opportunity of seeing the positive, looking for the potential and making it happen.

What is your academic philosophy?

Ⓐ Education is transformative not just for the here and now in school, but for the future. We work hard to enable our pupils to be excellent learners, but we are also mindful that we are equipping them for the possibility of being kind and responsible parents, employees, entrepreneurs, inventors or leaders. Every child has the potential for doing great and good things. As schools, we must aim to ignite ambition and inspire hope.

Can you tell us about one pivotal moment in your career?

Ⓐ Directing a play at a prep school early in my career confirmed to me that working with children was exciting, creative and worthwhile. Seeing the pupils' joy on their first night, and their sense of achievement, was pivotal in my thinking with regards to my future path.

What is your school's approach and what sets it apart?

Ⓐ This is a unique school – every Head will say that, I am sure. We belong to the royal, ancient and religious Bridewell Royal Hospital Foundation, of which I am Principal, with deep-rooted compassion, and a commitment to inclusion and diversity at its core. Our strong historical link with the City of London combines with our location in the beautiful Surrey Hills and demonstrates the span of our character. It holds so much breadth in one space as a brilliant community of grounded, caring all-rounders.

What makes a great student?

Ⓐ Enthusiasm, curiosity, kindness and a willingness to think well.

From your experience, what makes a great school environment?

Ⓐ Teamwork – the people, staff, pupils, parents – who share values and a common approach to being child-centred. The ability to be creative and agile in thinking combining with the opportunity to be authentic in caring and communication.

Great schools are able to laugh together as well as learn together. People who know themselves well, and can be reflective, are often the most progressive teachers. For me, a strong foundation, high ambitions and deep care for the individual pupil experience make the best school environment.

> **"Every child has the potential for doing great and good things – as schools we must aim to ignite ambition and inspire hope"**

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Julia, from South Korea, achieved A*A*A*A* at A level and progressed to UCL to read Chemical Engineering.

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